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S H E R L O C K ' S

L E T T E R S.

V O L. I.



LETTERS

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

BY THE

Rev. MARTIN SHERLOCK, A.M.

CHAPLAIN TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE
EARL OF BRISTOL.

O THAT MY ENEMY WOULD PUBLISH A BOOK !

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

DUBLIN:

Printed for W. HALLHEAD, No. 63, Dame-street;
L. L. FLIN, No. 15, Castle-street; and
P. BYRNE, No. 35, College-Green.

M,DCC,LXXXI.



TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
THE COUNTESS

OF

B R I S T O L.

MADAM,

EXCUSE me if I do not
praise the brightness of
your eyes, the richness of your
shape, or the uncommon noble-
ness of your soul. I am ill at
compliment, and do not chuse
to be every body's echo.

A 3

You

You know me, Madam, to be a modest man ; but though modest, I am ambitious : I aspire to please readers of taste and talents. If I have *your* suffrage, I shall have theirs.

I am, with the most perfect veneration and respect,

M A D A M ,

Your Ladyship's

Most obedient

Humble Servant,

MARTIN SHERLOCK.

P R E F A C E.

I AM persuaded my mother was in a good humour when I was made; for it is very hard to put me out of temper. If any thing could do it, it would be the severity with which I have been treated by the critics. Mercy on me! how they have maul'd me! Their indignation, however, has not fallen so much on my works as on my person. They allow my writings merit, but then I am the *vainest creature*.—Dear Reader, I hope you don't believe them. Sure you don't think there ever was such a character as a vain author.

O that my enemy would publish a book, said Solomon! and I always suspected that this royal writer had uttered

uttered this exclamation while he was smarting under the criticisms of some unmerciful Reviewer. These Reviewers have ever been a dangerous set of men. What I dislike most in them is their savage mode of attack. They shoot at you from behind a tree: you never see them. However, I believe their policy is good. Obscurity gives weight to their oracles. If they were known, their names alone would kill their criticisms.

I do not mean this as a declaration of war against them *all*. I am not strong enough to fight the whole world, as England does. There are among them men of parts and candour, who have treated me with indulgence, who have spared my person, who have done more than justice to any feeble talent I may possess, and who have enlightened me by their remarks. To the other gentlemen I must beg leave to say,
they

P R E F A C E. ix

they are guilty of an error in attacking an author's person. It is not their province. Their duty is to inform the public of the merits or demerits of his works. It is of importance to the public to know whether a writer speaks truth or falsehood, whether he writes sense or nonsense. It is of no importance to it to know whether he is a proud or a vain man.

To prove that I am *not* a vain man, I make two appeals; one to those who know me; and they, I am sure, will bear witness in my favour. The other appeal shall be to my reader. I am *forced* to begin with my own praise; but as it is strict truth, and *necessary for my defence*, the reader must pardon me. I have written in Italian, in English, and in French. The Reviewers of France, of Italy, and England, have criticised my writings. They have all agreed in one point, in allowing
me

x P R E F A C E.

me *good taste*. I stake my reputation upon this assertion, that there is not among them *all a single exception*. It is for my last book *alone* I am censured as vain. In this last book, which I published at Paris, I have written a letter upon * Taste. In a note on that letter, there is a defence of the taste of this country, in which are these words: “ But if “ these letters prove that I have no “ taste, I intreat the reader not to “ judge a nation by an individual, “ and to be persuaded that there are “ ten thousand men in England who “ have more taste than I.” Reader, is that the language of vanity ?

* Letter XXIV.

L E T -

LETTERS
ON
SEVERAL SUBJECTS.

LETTER I.

THE King of Prussia asked me, What was the reason there was so little Genius at this instant in Europe? I had often looked for an answer to this question before, but never could find one. I thought, however, it would be making a sorry figure not to say something; so I said, "Nature had exhausted herself in "producing his Majesty." This was *non-sense*, and *old nonsense* too; but the compliment at the end of it gave it an air of novelty. The King's eye widened. He said nothing.

It is inconceivable how absurdly men of sense sometimes talk, and how often they deceive themselves and others by a jargon of words, without ever examining the idea

they contain. For God's sake, what do men mean by saying that Nature exhausted herself in the age of Pericles, and that she repos'd to the days of Augustus? Weakened then, by the productions of some few Geniuses, she had again need to rest to the reign of Leo: and totally worn out, it seems, under Lewis the Fourteenth, she now wants a repose of three or four centuries, to enable her to produce something noble and splendid.

How many writers have printed this idea! What they mean by "Nature's being exhausted" I could never penetrate.

Some ages ago a man and a woman made Homer. This Homer, in every respect like another man, had the good fortune to unite a nice ear, fine feelings, and a solid judgment, to an extensive and vigorous imagination. These he had given him at his birth; and these he improved considerably by practice. His other acquirements were the consequence of conversation, travel, and an attentive observation of nature.

Ariosto was born many centuries after. He came also into the world as you and I did; but gifted, like Homer, with a fine ear and a brilliant imagination. By labour and

and study he became master of the poetical language of his country ; and, notwithstanding his many and great defects, he is justly to be reckoned among the first Geniuses that Nature has produced.

What connection there is between Homer's and Ariosto's coming into the world, is a mystery of which I have not yet been able to find the key.

An honest wool-merchant at Stratford got England's glory. How far *he* might have been exhausted in so doing I cannot tell ; but how that is to hinder another wool-merchant at Stratford from getting another Shakspeare this night, is beyond my comprehension.

I wish I knew how men of genius are made, and I should gladly communicate the receipt to the world. Every one who has passed through * Aousta knows the way that fools are made. It is a custom, in the vintage months, for the husband and wife to go to their cellars after dinner to drink the new wine, and when they are both half-intoxicated they make ideots. This place is full of naturals ; and they are almost all born nine months after the vintage season.

What a digression!—from the brightest Genius of Europe to its intellectual abortions. But you know that Letter-writing is naturally rambling, and that apology is sufficient.

His Majesty talked a great deal about Shakspeare. He speaks eloquently, and attacked our poet with vigour. He began, indeed, with gentleness and goodness in his manner—“You admire Shakspeare?”—“I do, Sire, as the greatest Genius that ever existed.”—“*Permit me* to observe,” he had the condescension to say, “that when a man undertakes to labour in any art, of which the rules are fixed and determinate, he ought to confine himself to those rules. Aristotle”—and then he spoke for some minutes with great strength and learning. I soon saw that Voltaire had corrupted him; and though I said all I could, consistent with the respect I owed a Royal Opponent, it was to no purpose. I was always obliged to agree that he was right, while I endeavoured to prove that he was wrong. I appealed from Aristotle’s rules to the tribunal of Nature and Reason. I insisted humbly upon the *incontestible* prerogative of Genius to create,

* He had seen it in my Book.

create, and that consequently Shakspere had the same right to invent a species of poetry that Thespis had. The attack was *à la Prussienne*; the defence was *à l'Angloise*—I confess I liked the defence—but I am afraid I was partial.

He asked me after, Whether there was any successor in England to Shakspere, Newton, and Hume? I said, None. He asked, *Why* was there so great a dearth of literary genius in a country which had produced so many great men? I thought this question less difficult to be answered than his first. “The great roads to emoluments and honours in that country, Sire, “are the Ear and the Houses of Parliament; and therefore every man aims to “render himself famous by his tongue “rather than his pen.”—His Majesty seemed satisfied with this reason.

LETTER

LETTER II.

HAVE Women genius? I think they have; and I could mention the names of several living, both in France and England, to support my opinion. But let us endeavour to have a clear idea of what genius is, and every one then may decide the question for himself.

Genius is but another word for Invention. Create any thing new, that creation is a work of genius. The only faculty necessary to create is imagination. To produce an elegant, great, or useful creation, this imagination must be directed by judgment. Genius then is the union of a sound judgment and a superior imagination. Originality is its infallible criterion.

I know of no man that ever existed, the whole of whose genius is not comprehended in this description. Archimedes, Newton, Shakspeare, and Richardson, were only superior to other mortals by stronger judgments and superior imaginations..

The greatest effort of genius that perhaps was ever made, was forming the plan
of

of Clarissa Harlowe. The second was executing that plan. Here then was genius, upon its most elevated and most extensive scale. The planning and execution of * Nourjahad were equally efforts of genius. They differ only in degree.

The plan of the Iliad was formed in Homer's imagination, as that of Alexander's Ode was formed in Dryden's. The conception and execution of those two works were equally efforts of genius, and only differed in degree, like Clarissa and Nourjahad.

The species of genius are as infinite as its gradations. The General or Admiral who creates a new manœuvre, proves that he has genius. If he forms a grand plan for a campaign, he shews himself to be a Genius of a superior order: I believe no one doubts that Turenne's pretensions to this title are as justly founded as those of Homer.

No men have such frequent and such great occasions to display genius as Ministers have. The man who gave the best proof of the superiority of his invention
since

* Written by Mrs. Sheridan, author of Sidney Biddulph, The Discovery, &c. one of the first female Geniuses that ever wrote.

since this war began, was he who conceived the idea of the *Armed * Neutrality*.

Genius is often seen in works of very little compass :

Vidit & erubuit lymphä pudica Deum,
was a line of genius which announced Dryden ; and Busby felt it.

Noëte pluit totâ, redeunt spectacula mane,
Divisum imperium cum Jove Cæsar habet,
was a distich of genius which announced Virgil ; and Augustus felt it.

My notion is, that every person who has strength of imagination sufficient to produce any thing new, be that production ever so small, is a person of genius ; and that consequently the inventor of the Bayonet and the author of the Sentimental Journey were men of genius, as well as Shakspeare and the man who invented the art of Printing.

I have quoted a line and a distich as proofs of genius. I will go farther, and assert that it appears often in a single word :

Imparadis'd in one another's arms ;
says Milton :

When,

* This, by the way, is an idea that I hazard.

When, like an eagle in a dove-coat, I
Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli ;
says Coriolanus.

Imparadis'd and *Flutter'd* are words of genius, and none but men of superior imaginations could have produced them.

It would be easy to write a volume on this subject; but I have already said enough to prove what I advanced in the beginning of my Letter, that Women have genius; for I have said that Sterne had some, and every man knows Women who had more genius than Sterne had.

LETTER III.

MANY people consider sensibility as a part of genius. They mistake. Sensibility is a distinct faculty ; very distinct indeed ; for it belongs to the soul, with which genius has no necessary connection. Is there any soul in the works of Newton or Archimedes ? in the architecture of Michael Angelo, or in that of Palladio ? Yet these men's title to genius is not to be disputed.

What has led people into this error, is their finding sensibility in a very eminent degree in some men of superior imaginations. Too happy they who unite them ! Human Nature is then arrived at her highest summit of perfection ; she *can* go no farther.

I request you will remember I am not laying down systems. I give you my ideas upon certain points, as you desired ; and I am now going only to mention my own particular taste, of which you will adopt or reject as much as you think proper.

I prefer

I prefer a man of genius who has sensibility to a man of imagination who has not. One should imagine that all the world would be of my way of thinking. The fact, however, is not so; I have known many men prefer Horace *as a poet* to Virgil; and almost all the Italians prefer Ariosto to Tasso. Horace had certainly a fine fancy, and Ariosto's imagination was, no doubt, superior to Tasso's; but Tasso has many passages that elevate and soften the soul, Ariosto scarce any. And as to Virgil, I confess I feel ten times more pleasure in reading his fourth book, and part of his ninth, than I do in all the odes of Horace.

It is inconceivable what a number of men there are in the world who are totally devoid of sensibility. I remember to have heard a story in France of a young man, who just came from the country, and went with two Ladies to see the tragedy of Iphigenia.

* His Satires and Epistles are out of the question: he is only a poet in his Odes. If morality was to be considered, Horace is to be preferred to Virgil; and the author of the Ramblers to both of them put together. But this is a separate point. We are talking of them here only as poets.

Iphigenia. When the whole house was dissolved in tears at a very affecting scene, the Ladies observed that their cousin remained totally unaffected; and one of them asked him, why he did not cry as they did. "Why," says he, "for two reasons; first, I know that what I see is not true; and next, suppose it was, what is that to me?"

Real fine feelings are a much rarer gift than is generally imagined. With what cold indifference do many people see their fellow-creatures in distress, and read Clarissa, without shedding a tear! Clarissa, because they know it is not true; and human beings in misery, because, though it is true, what is that to them?

LETTER

LETTER IV.

YOU think Voltaire the first *Bel Esprit* that ever lived. So do I. You think he had genius. There I am sorry we differ. If he had, it was so little I could never discover it; and I looked for it often. But I can find genius in almost every page of Shakspeare. Though I have little learning, I scarce ever discover a beauty in Voltaire, without being able to tell where the mother-idea of it is to be found.

The works of Voltaire which should best shew his genius, if he had any, are *Candide* and a Poem which I dare not name. His imagination here was without restraint; and what has it produced? Ridiculous extravagancies and absurdities that disgust. These however are the two productions that do most honour to his talents, particularly the last. There are as happy passages in it for delicacy of wit and brilliancy of style as ever were read; but the number of horrors with which it abounds makes it shocking

shocking to men of decency, and disgusting to all readers of taste.

As to the invention of this poem, every one knows that it belongs entirely to Chapelain and Ariosto; as the ground-work of *Candide* is borrowed from Swift. So that his admirers may give to these performances every other merit they please; but as to genius, it is out of the question.

I am Voltaire's friend and enemy. He is a very voluminous and a very unequal author. There is a great deal of good, and a great deal of bad in him. His writings sometimes breathe a spirit of humanity, and a love of tolerance, which must endear him to every reader. His style is charming; always rapid, easy, brilliant. Diction in writing is like colouring in a picture; it is the first thing that strikes, and with most persons the only thing. Splendid language and bright colours will dazzle ninety-nine people in an hundred, captivate their eye and their fancy, and impose upon their understanding. This has been the grand magic by which this seducing writer has fascinated almost all classes of readers. No man ever wrote with greater elegance, delicacy, or grace. So polished, so agreeable, so full

of

of the tone of the best company, he must please every person who loves mankind, who admires wit, and who knows how to appreciate the charms of fine writing.

Turn the medal, and what an unhappy reverse ! Audacious preacher of infidelity, malignant calumniator of the most virtuous characters, odious encourager of every species of vice, he sacrificed all human and divine ideas to his favourite passions ; and prostituted talents, formed to adorn humanity, to a miserable love of money and of fame. A prostitute he was, and of the most despicable class. Born to independence, and possessed of affluence early in life, he could not plead the solicitations of necessity ; and the innumerable passages of invective, licentiousness, and impiety, which abound in his works, make him fall an unpitied victim of his own innate baseness and depravity.

Here let it not be imagined I declaim against a philosopher enlightened and humane. I declaim against him because he was *not* humane. Was that man the lover of his race who deprived the afflicted of their most healing balm, and the aged of their greatest consolation ? Let the aged and afflicted answer the question.—Where

lies

lies the chief alleviation of their sufferings? Is it not in religion? Was that man then the friend of mankind, who endeavoured to rob so large a portion of it of their strongest hope, and of their most pleasing enjoyments? Was that man the friend of mankind, who brought the Chevalier de la Barre to be broke alive upon the wheel; and who sowed unhappiness through the world as far as he propagated immorality?

His tragedies, you'll say, are moral and instructive. And why are they? Because to fill them with noble sentiments and sound morality was the most likely method to insure their success. Individuals love their own private vices. Bodies of men ever love and countenance virtue. A romance or poem is written for an individual in the dark. A tragedy is addressed to a collective body in the face of day. He knew all this, and, desirous only to please every palate, he served up virtue to the virtuous, and vice to the debauched, and gave to both the highest seasoning a luxuriant fancy could compose.

If you will permit me to follow this metaphor and return to his talents, I will say, Voltaire was a great literary cook. Give him good meats, no man knew better how

how to dress them. But they must be given him, for he was not rich enough to provide them himself.

Don't you think his works resemble Corinthian brass? He took the gold of Shakspere, Virgil, Corneille, Racine, Ariosto, and Pope, and the silver of La Fare, Chaulieu, Fontenelle, and Hamilton, and melted them together in the crucible of his brain. The metal produced was neither pure, nor gold, nor silver; it was brass; but it was Corinthian brass.

LETTER

LETTER V.

BUT Voltaire's quantity astonishes. It never astonished me. He made verses at twelve years old. By eighteen he had published works, and was introduced by Ninon d'Enclos to the most polished people of Paris. From eighteen to eighty-four he never ceased to labour; and is it astonishing that in sixty-two years he produced about six good volumes? Will any impartial man say that there are more than six volumes of his forty which are really worth mentioning?

Is there an advantage that an author can have that this man wanted? Born independent; situated at Paris; protected by the great; courted, I may say, by Sovereigns; his works purchased with avidity by booksellers; devoured with greater avidity by the public; the advantages of learning, travel, and so long a life; what an assemblage of happy circumstances! Is it prodigious that one-sixth part of his works is worthy of praise?

I think

I think Dryden was a man of better parts than Voltaire. But how different their situations in life! The one never obliged to enter his cabinet, till to enter it gave him pleasure; the other sat shivering at his table, with famine staring him in the face if he did not produce his four plays at the end of a year: one enjoying every luxury of life; the other in want of all its necessaries: Dryden living in a climate unfavourable to fancy, and certainly forced to live upon malt liquors, which almost kill the imagination: the meat and manner of dressing it, the milk, cheese, and butter, and every other article of life, decidedly conduced to thicken the blood, clog its motion, and consequently to deaden the fancy. Voltaire breathing a pure and vivifying air; no heavy liquors; no gross nourishment; every article of life the very reverse of what it is in England. The French poet living on the theatre of Europe (a most important circumstance); the English poet confined to the British dominions. If Voltaire, at a supper, produced four happy lines, in six weeks they had gone farther than Dryden's fame will possibly ever reach: his language universally understood; his merit of consequence universally

versally *felt*. Every thing that tends to raise and quicken the spirits is of use to a man who works from fancy ; and what raises the spirits higher than the idea of universal admiration ? Every circumstance in France is favourable to talents : every circumstance is against them in England, except one. They are recompensed here in a manner unknown to any other nation. The Earl of Southampton gave Shakspeare more in one present than Voltaire ever received from all the nobility of France. Dr. Robertson received, I dare say, six times as much for his History of Charles V. as he could have got for it in any other capital in Europe, supposing the book had been written in the language of the country. Rewards like these conquer climate and every other disadvantage. But poor Dryden lived in a worthless reign, and was too happy not to die literally by hunger, as his contemporary Otway did.

All the ideas in these two last letters may be false. Perhaps they may make true ones arise in you.

LETTER VI.

THE *Henriade* is a finer epic poem
“ than the Iliad, the Æneid, the
“ Jerusalem Delivered, or than the Para-
“ dise Lost.”

Well said, Lord Chesterfield. I like a man that has an opinion of his own; and this opinion was positively his lordship's, unless, as I have more than once been tempted to suspect, he stole it from Voltaire.

To support this singular judgment he says, “ It is all good senie from beginning to end.” So it is; and so is the History of Lewis the Fourteenth; but that does not make it an epic poem. Lord Chesterfield might have said a great deal more in its favour without annihilating poor Homer, Virgil, Milton, and Tasso. But he seems to me to have loved Greek as little as a Frenchman does; and I am not sure that he had quite talents enough to praise well. Richardson remarks very justly, that poverty of genius is the reason that
men

men can't praise one woman but by robbing the rest.

The noble writer might have courted this author much better, because more truly, by saying, the *Henriade* is a fine poem, written with elegance, correctness, and dignity. The diction is rich and splendid, the thoughts just, the sentiments noble, and the versification as harmonious as French versification *can* be. He might have told him ; Your poem, notwithstanding its points and antitheses, has less defects than either the *Aeneid* or the *Iliad* ;— and (this he need not have told him, but he should have thought it)—it's only material faults are want of *interest*, want of enthusiasm, and want of original beauties.

Some of his * Portraits are brilliant and bold. The Death of † Coligny, the description of the ‡ Massacre and of the § Temple of Love, deserve the warmest praise.

These are the best passages in his poem ; and they are truly excellent. However, I cannot think they are sufficient to eclipse the

* Particularly that of the Duke of Guise,
Chant III. † Chant II. ‡ Ibid.
§ Chant IX.

the greatest works that England, Italy, and Greece can boast of. Indeed my Lord Chesterfield seems to have doubted himself of the truth of his assertion, for, forgetting his wonted good-breeding, he has recourse to some of Lord Peter's * arguments, and abuses grossly every one who presumes to differ from him in opinion.

* Tale of a Tub.

LETTER

LETTER VII.

I DO not know any writer whose irony is equal to Voltaire's for edge and polish; nor do I know any writer who possessed the Graces in a more eminent degree than he did. There is an elegance in his manner, and a delicacy in his turns, which cannot be surpassed. I shall give here two short specimens, in a Letter, and a *quatrain*.

You know that to have merit in any literary line, was sufficient to excite the envy and hatred of this extraordinary man. M. le President de Pompignan, author of *Dido*, and a poet of real talents, had the misfortune to be singularly disagreeable to M. de Voltaire, who, according to his usual custom, without respect to truth or decency, wrote a number of violent and atrocious calumnies against him. The brother of this Gentleman, who, as well as I recollect, was in the army, sent a Letter to the Satirist, in which he told him, that, if ever he wrote against any of his family again, he should *cut off his ears*. M. de Choiseul

Choiseul was then in the ministry; and Voltaire sent him the following Letter:

“ Monsieur,

“ Tout le sang de Pompignan m'en
 “ veut; l'un m' écorche les oreilles depuis
 “ vingt ans; l'autre me marque recem-
 “ ment qu'il veut me les couper. Chargez
 “ vous de ce spadassin, Monsieur; & moi,
 “ je me chargerai de l'écorcheur; car enfin
 “ je veux conserver mes oreilles, ne seroit
 “ ce que pour entendre tout le bien qu'on
 “ dit de votre ministere.

“ Je suis, Monsieur, &c.”

Isn't that a charming Letter? You see he was almost frightened out of his wits; for he was a very timorous man. But with what address does he conceal his terrors! and at the same time how ingenious, lively, and graceful is his address to the Minister to preserve his ears!

M. de la Borde was going on a visit to Ferney; Madame du Barry begged of him to give Voltaire two kisses from her. He sent her, in return, these four lines:

*Quoi! deux baisers sur la fin de ma vie!
 Quel passeport daignez vous m'envoyer!
 Ah! c'en est trop, adorable Egerie,
 Je serois mort de plaisir au premier.*

Only think of these verses, when he was almost eighty !

If I had a mind to quote blemishes and abominations, God knows there is a plentiful crop of them in his works. But, besides that I do not chuse to present any thing offensive to my reader's imagination, nor to pollute my own pages, I have more pleasure in pointing out beauties than faults.

“ I love to praise with reason on my side.”

The unfortunate Princess of Brunswick, who was married to the Prince Royal of Prussia, was condemned, for conjugal infidelity, to perpetual confinement in the town of Stetin, where you know she now is. The King always liked this Princess. She sent to France for a handsome gown. All French goods pay very high duty in the Prussian dominions; and when the robe arrived, the officer of the customs refused to send it to the Princess till he had received the duty. She sent him a very civil message, requesting he would bring the stuff, and that she would give him the money. As soon as she had taken it from him, and locked it up, she flew upon him, and gave him two most violent boxes in the face.

The

The man complained to the King ; said he was dishonoured, and demanded redress. His Majesty wrote the following determination.

“ La perte du droit d'accise sera sur mon
 “ compte. La robe restera à la Princesse.
 “ Les deux soufflets à celui qui les a reçus.
 “ Quant au pretendu déshonneur j'en
 “ réleve le plaignant : jamais l'application
 “ d'une belle main n'a pu déshonorer la
 “ face d'un douanier.

“ FREDERIC.”

Though this decision is pretty generally known, I give it you here, that you may compare Voltaire's *manner* with the King of Prussia's. They are both of the same school ; but there is a shade between them, which I defy language to express, though it is very perceptible, and very easily felt.

LETTER VIII.

MR. Addison was a very fine writer; easy, elegant, graceful, and polished. He has written * *professedly* on wit; and after having remarked that no author had *entered into the bottom of this matter*, he has, with great judgment, divided his subject into three parts. All that he says upon mixed and false wit appears to me to be perfect. I cannot say I think him equally happy in what he says on true wit.

He begins with observing, that Mr. Locke has an admirable reflection upon the difference between wit and judgment, whereby he endeavours to shew the reason why they are not always the talents of the same person. His words are as follow:

“ And † hence, perhaps, may be given
“ some reason of that common observation,
“ that

* Spectator, No. 58, and the five following Papers.

† Because Mr. Locke has laid here, that men who have a great deal of wit have not *always* the clearest

" that men who have a great deal of wit
 " and prompt memories, have not always
 " the clearest judgment, or deepest reason.
 " For wit lying most in the assemblage of
 " ideas, and putting those together with
 " quickness and variety, wherein can be
 " found any resemblance or congruity
 " thereby to make up pleasant pictures
 " and

clearest judgment ; and because he has said a little
 after, that judgment, *on the contrary, lies quite on
 the other side,* many people have understood that he
 meant that wit and judgment were at variance,
 and that they were never, or at least very seldom,
 to be met together. If people speak about ordi-
 nary Wits, I give up the question ; but if they
 mean Wits of the first rank, I contend for the direct
 contrary of this assertion ; and I affirm, that though
 a man may have an infallible judgment without
 possessing a particle of wit, it is impossible for him
 to have wit without judgment ; and that so far
 from judgment's being opposite to wit, it is its
 constant companion, and absolutely inseparable
 from it. Who do you think, Reader, were the
 three greatest Wits of this country ? I believe you
 will answer, Swift, Congreve, and Mr. Sheridan.
 Which of those three men wanted judgment ?

When the fancy has discovered a relationship
 between two remote ideas, surely the judgment
 must determine whether the discovery be a just one.
 If there is not judgment to decide for the fancy,
 she operates at random, and for one just trait of
 wit that she produces, she will produce ten false
 ones.

" and agreeable visions in the fancy ; judgment, on the contrary, lies quite on the other side, in separating carefully one from another, ideas wherein can be found the least difference, thereby to avoid being misled by similitude and by affinity to take one thing for another. This is a way of proceeding quite contrary to metaphor and allusion ; wherein, for the most part, lies that entertainment and pleasantry of wit which strikes so lively on the fancy, and is therefore so acceptable to all people."

Mr. Addison adds to this, by way of explanation, " that every resemblance of ideas is not that which we call wit, unless it be such an one that gives *delight* and *surprise* to the reader : these two properties seem essential to wit, more particularly the last of them." I have the good fortune to think intirely with Mr. Addison, that those two properties are essential to wit ; but, speaking with all the deference due to so great a man, I do not think it is more particularly *the last* of them : I think it is more particularly *the first*.

When I presume to differ from such an author as this, I write with diffidence ; but

but Locke has justly advanced that “ no deference is to be paid to authority ; ” and I explain myself by an instance : when Othello says,

“ I caught by the throat, the uncircum-
“ cised dog,

“ And smote him thus ; ”

I am sure no man living ever foresaw the close. *And smote him thus* is a very high degree of surprize ; but it gives no delight, and no one ever thought of calling it wit.

There is generally a peculiar justness and perspicuity in the illustrations of this great critic, which render them at once agreeable and instructive. I am not sure that I am not mistaken here ; but what does the reader think ? To support and illustrate his idea that *surprise* more particularly is essential to wit, he says, “ Thus “ when a poet tells us the bosom of his “ mistress is as white as snow, there is no “ wit in the comparison (because there is “ no surprise) : but when he adds, with a “ sigh, that it is as cold too, it then grows “ into wit ; ” (because this last is unexpected.) I confess, this idea appears to me to be totally false. Who ever heard of a sighing Wit ? Is Romeo a Wit ? No ; but Mercutio is. If a man’s saying, “ the
“ bosom

<

" bosom of his mistress is as white as snow,
 " but alas ! it is as cold too," be *wit*, there
 never was a wittier poet than Petrarch.
 Yet I do not remember to have ever heard
 that Petrarch was a Wit. *Delight* is inse-
 parable from wit, and gaiety is the con-
 stant companion of delight *.

This is all that Mr. Addison has said of
 true wit, and this is the single example
 he has given of it : this, I ask his pardon,
 appears to me to be no example at all.

He afterwards quotes Dryden's defini-
 tion of wit, which he very judiciously †
 condemns, as not being so properly a de-
 finition of wit as of good writing in general.
 " It is (says Dryden) a propriety of words
 " and thoughts adapted to the subject." Is it not extraordinary that so sagacious a
 writer as Addison did not see, that, in con-
 demning

* Read over what Locke has said in the begin-
 ning of this letter, and you will find the words
pleasant, *agreeable*, *entertainment*, *pleasantry*, *lively*. There is nothing like this in a lover's saying, his
 mistress's bosom is as cold as snow.

† He might have condemned Pope's along with
 it, and nearly for the same reason ;

" True wit is nature to advantage dress'd."

Pope's definition in prose is no better than his
 definition in verse ; " It is a quick conception,
 " and an easy delivery."

denying Dryden, he was passing judgment upon himself? Listen to him in the very next paragraph.

" Bouhours, whom I look upon to be " the most penetrating of all the French " critics, has taken pains to shew, that it " is impossible for any thought to be beau- " tiful which is not just, and has not its " foundation in the nature of things; that " the basis of all wit is truth; and that no " thought can be valuable of which good " sense is not the ground-work. Boileau " has endeavoured to inculcate the same " notion in several parts of his writings, " both in prose and verse. This is that " natural way of writing, that beautiful " simplicity, which distinguishes the an- " cients, and which nobody deviates from " but those who want strength of genius to " make a thought shine in its own native " beauties. Poets, who want strength of " genius to give that majestic simplicity to " Nature," &c. Nobody, I believe, de- nies any part of this; but what has it to do particularly with wit? Are not truth and good sense the necessary ground-work of every species of excellent composition? And is not all this as true of *good writing in general*, as it is of wit? But of all the ideas

that were ever thought of, what has wit to do with a *majestic simplicity*? Wit and Majesty are almost * opposites. Simplicity, I allow, is the first grace of every work of every species. But there are different sorts of simplicity; and that which belongs peculiarly to wit is a † brilliant simplicity, and not a *majestic* one.

L E T.

* They met once in the King of Prussia.

† Brilliancy ever had, and ever ought to have, a powerful effect upon mankind. No eye can be insensible to the lustre of the diamond. All that can be guarded against is receiving false brilliant for true. As a false stone highly polished will deceive an ignorant eye; so a false thought in splendid language will dazzle and impose on an uncultivated imagination. "A pun" (says Dr. Johnson) "was the Cleopatra for which Shak-
"speare lost the world." Antony lost the world for Cleopatra, and lost it to Augustus; but to whom did Shakespeare lose it? If the Augustus cannot be named, Dr. Johnson's brilliant phrase is false wit.

LETTER IX.

WIT is compounded of imagination and judgment. So I said genius was. Yet wit and genius are not two similar faculties which differ only in degree; they are very distinct. A sound judgment is equally necessary to both; but the imagination in a man of genius differs not only in magnitude from the same faculty in a man of wit, but seems to me to be almost of a different species. In many respects they resemble each other, but the essential difference which I think separates them is *heat*. Allow me a familiar image, and I'll make my meaning clear. Wit resembles a lively French lap-dog; genius a high-bred English fox-hound: genius resembles a conflagration; wit an artificial firework: or, if you chuse a higher and perhaps a juster allusion, genius may be compared to a torrent of lava, and wit to a lively limpid rivulet.

The object of wit is to please; the object of genius is to invent. There never was a man of genius who was not a *deep* thinker:

thinker: people may have wit who never think deeply; witness a hundred women who are full of wit, and who are incapable of deep thinking. Wit is pretty; genius is sublime: that charms; this transports; wit sparkles; genius blazes: that gives pleasure; this gives rapture. We love wit; we revere genius. The lips of wit are dressed in smiles, as were the lips of Sterne and Voltaire; the brow of genius is plowed with wrinkles, as you see in the busts of Newton and Archimedes. Wit's laurels flourish while they are protected by novelty; the bays of genius acquire freshness by the lapse of years. Am I partial, or am I true? Perhaps I deceive myself, but I mean to be just; Shakspere's reputation increases daily, while Voltaire's fame is hourly decaying.

I have said that heat appears to me to be the quality that discriminates genius from wit. A man may be witty in a very eminent degree, and not have a ray of that vigorous and vivifying warmth which is necessary to impregn the fancy. Few men had more wit than Pope; yet wanting, like Voltaire, that male energy and burning glow, which alone distinguish the true-born genius, he never can be ranked but

in.

in a secondary class. Compare him with Dryden. And since he thought proper to enter the lists with that poet, in writing an ode on St. Cecilia's day, let those two odes determine between them. One is the cool, tame, pretty rivulet ; the other the Vesuvian torrent I spoke of.

The evident criterion of warmth in a writer is his heating his reader. And were I to decide from my own feelings I should say, that Shakspeare and Homer were the first poetic geniuses that ever wrote ; and that Corneille's genius was superior to Racine's.

From all this dissertation on wit and genius, it is pretty evident on which side the superiority lies. But let not the Wit be discontented with his lot ; perhaps it is the milder of the two. As works of genius are difficult to be produced, so they are not easy to be estimated. A trait of wit is produced in an instant ; an instant is sufficient to determine its value. The admiration acquired by genius is partial and slow ; the success of wit is rapid and universal. Richardson is not yet arrived at the fulness of his glory ; Voltaire gained admirers as fast as he got readers. Wit is relished by every class of mankind ; while

heaven-

heaven-born genius is tasted but by few. Some months gave Sterne more reputation than Milton acquired in many years ; and had it not been for a man of wit, perhaps the author of our sublimest poem would have been still but little known.

Gray beautifully says ;

“ Full many a gem of purest ray serene

“ The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean
“ bear ;

“ Full many a flower is born to blush
“ unseen,

“ And waste its sweetnes on the desert
“ air.”

And, as many a genius remains uncultivated and unregarded in the world ; so it is more than probable that many a *Paradise Lost* lies neglected for want of Addisons to point out their merits.

There are a hundred species of wit. It would be easy to mention them all ; but it would be useless, unless I illustrated each by a quotation. This would cost me a great deal of time and labour. I have the highest respect for my reader ; but I must request his permission to defer this to another opportunity.

L. E. T.

LETTER X.

SIR, says a man to Swift, I have a mind to set up for a Wit. Sir, says Swift, I advise you to sit down again. This was very good advice, particularly in this country, where, that same author has observed, not one man in ten thousand has wit. Almost every body is witty in France. Why then there, and not here? The reasons are purely physical; for Englishmen ought to have twenty times more wit than Frenchmen.

Ideas are the matter of which wit is made, and the English have infinitely more ideas than the French. This arises from their early education, from their being a more reading people, &c. You see this is a very strong reason why the English ought to be superior to the French in this point.

But if ideas are the materials, fancy is the instrument which operates on those materials; and here comes in the superiority of the French. Their fancies are livelier, brighter, and quicker.

The

The force of the imagination depends a great deal on the affluence of the animal spirits; its brightness, on the refinement of those spirits; and its quickness, on the celerity of their movement. Now, in point of copiousness of spirits, the English, I believe, have the advantage of the French. A bull has more spirits in him than an ape; but the ape's spirits are always in motion, and it is very difficult to move the bull's. This, you see, is a case in point; and John Bull, I am persuaded, has a greater quantity of spirits than *Jack Singe*. But the Frenchman's spirits are more refined and quicker in their motions than ours, and this for a number of reasons. I shall here mention some of the principal.

A Frenchman never tastes malt liquor, he eats no butter, and his bread is light: the meat in France is not near so fat as it is here, and it is much better dressed: the sauces are poignant, and not greasy; he eats a great deal of soup and light vegetables; he drinks in moderation as much wine and water as is necessary to dilute his dinner, and then he takes as much good wine, coffee, and liqueurs, as is necessary to heat his stomach, and quicken the circulation of his blood, and no more. Add

to

to this the pureness of the air, and the light society of the most amiable women in the world, in which he passed so much of his time; and you will see reasons enough why his spirits should be quicker in their motion and more refined than ours.

I need not mention how opposite our manner of living is; the quantities of blood-food we eat, the quantity of bad wine we drink, the grossness of our atmosphere, nor many other causes that hinder the celerity of our fancies, and consequently impede considerably the vivacity of our wit.

However, the English do not think much of the superiority of the French in this article. They pique themselves on having better sense and more learning than their neighbours; and they have more sense and learning. The French allow this, and it does not give them any uneasiness. They value themselves on being wittier and more amiable than the English; and they are wittier and more amiable. When a Frenchman has knowledge, and is grown a little steady, his company is delightful; when an Englishman has fancy and good manners, his society is enchanting. I always thought that those two nations,

nations, blended together, would produce perfection in every thing.

To return to wit. If a man is full of quick and refined spirits; if he has a number of ideas, and if he has a ready and sound judgment to determine the justness of a combination as soon as it is made, that man cannot fail to have wit. If he exercises his fancy much in this way, it will acquire a great facility from practice; and he will often be witty almost without knowing it. This is another reason why the French have wit; they are continually running after it. I need not tell you why they seek it so much. You know nothing pleases more than wit does; and the whole nation has a desire to please.

I knew an odd fellow, who told me that, whenever he had a mind to be witty, he fed himself for it some time before; as they do game-cocks, to make them fight.
 "I live, Sir," said he, "upon eggs, oyters,
 "cream, jellies, barley-broth, succulent
 "foods of all sorts, and drink porter.
 "This fills me with blood and spirits; but
 "at the same time it fills me with grofs
 "humours; and I am as dull as an Al-
 "derman. I then take a medicine or
 "two, which carries off the coarser and
 "heavier

" heavier parts of those fluids: the spirits
 " by this, you see, become purified and
 " refined; it only remains to put them in
 " motion; and this I do by a page of
 " Shakspeare, a sprightly companion, a
 " good gallop in a post-chaise, by music,
 " coffee, or applying a napkin steeped in
 " spirits of wine or brandy to my forehead.
 " I am then as witty as an angel, and
 " happy is the man or woman that comes
 " in my way—while the fit lasts." This
 was an eccentric sort of Being; but I
 thought there was good sense in what he
 said.

Another thing in England which deadens our fancies is, "that surly spirit, Melancholy, bakes our blood, and makes it heavy, thick; which, in France, runs tickling up and down the veins, making that ideot Laughter hold men's eyes and strain their cheeks to idle merriment." I quote Shakspeare as a philosopher; and you see he says melancholy clogs the motion of the blood, and consequently, if my system be a just one, annihilates fancy. Gaiety, on the contrary, accelerates the motion of the spirits, and is at once the promoter and supporter of wit.

For

For this reason, and a thousand others, I shall conclude with a moral exhortation, in the words of an amiable * poet:

“ Let’s be gay,
“ While we may,”
&c. &c. &c.

* Gay.

L E T-

LETTER XI.

THE world is unjust to polite writers. It says they are only entertaining; but that, being of no solid utility to mankind, they do not merit a place in the first rank of authors. If it be true that they are of no benefit to society, I shall most readily agree that they are entitled to a very small degree of esteem. *To do good* ought to be the great object of every worthy being; and the author or artist who loses sight of this object, be his talents what they may, must always be looked upon in an inferior light.

Whoever gives innocent pleasure, does good. And if these writers had no other merit, that alone would entitle them to a certain degree of consideration from the world. But they appear to me to benefit mankind *more* than any other class of authors; and consequently I think they deserve a degree of public favour proportioned to the advantages that society gains by their labours.

Ask any man, Who are the writers of the highest dignity? He will answer,
Historians.

Historians. He has answered a question which he has never examined ; and which, probably, he learned by rote before he was able to examine it. Ask him a second, and he will prove what I advance. Desire him to tell you, whether he has received more pleasure and useful instruction from Mr. Addison's Spectators, or from Dr. Robertson's History of Charles the * Fifth, and I will venture to say he will answer, if he reflects a little, From the Spectators. Ask him then which of those two authors works have done most good to the people of the present age, men and women ; and which will do most good to all succeeding ages ; if he is capable of judging coolly, and knows the world, I am persuaded he will answer, Mr. Addison.

All the ideas which have ever passed through my head, may have passed, for aught I know, through the heads of a thousand other men ; and are, for aught I can tell, printed in a hundred books. What I have just said, and what I am going

* I should be very sorry that any one should imagine I meant here to detract from Dr. Robertson's merits. I am not ignorant that he has great and universal fame throughout Europe ; and I well know that he deserves it.

going to say, may have often been said and written already. I shall not deny that, because I do not know it to be true. I shall only affirm, that I have copied no man, and that all I say, good and bad, is drawn from myself, and from my own observation. I have looked upon the world a good while, and I believe I know it. I read formerly a few good books; and chance has procured me advantages which do not happen to every body; those of conversing with a number of the most polished and most enlightened persons now living. From all that I have ever been able to collect from reading, seeing, thinking, and conversation, I have long since laid it up as a fixed conclusion in my mind, that refined taste and elevated morals were most intimately connected; and that consequently the man who promotes the one, does infinite service to the cause of the other.

Good sense is the foundation of morality as well as of * taste; and the first point towards perfecting both is acquiring a just and solid understanding.

The

* "Tout doit tendre au bon sens."

"Scribendi recte sapere est principium & fons."

The great leading principles of taste are also the first principles in morals. * Decency and truth are equally essential to both; and what I say is so certain, that those two sentences which have been so often quoted as principles of taste, are found in two epistles which are written entirely on moral subjects.

A very considerable part of the young men of this country run into vice, not from natural vicious inclinations, but from want of knowing how to dispose of their time. If they had a taste for letters and for the arts, *that* would open to them a never-failing fountain of amusement; and, at the same time that it afforded them entertainment, would, by refining their understandings, and polishing their imaginations, make them loath the low pleasures of riot and debauchery, in which they now waste their time, and destroy their constitutions.

Another advantage of taste is that of awakening the feelings. Few men are born without feeling; but it lies dormant in many; in many it is perverted; and in a great

* "Quid verum atque decens."

"Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est aimable."

a great number it is hardened by their commerce with the worthless part of the world. The power of taste is sufficiently strong, not only to call out the seeds of humanity that lie, if I may so say, asleep within our breasts; but what is infinitely stronger, and indeed almost astonishing, it is capable of correcting cruelty. I speak from fact. Augustus was an uncommonly cruel man. He delighted in bloodshed. While he was feasting his senses with the inhuman spectacle of gladiators butchering each other, Mæcenas, who stood behind him, and was a man of taste and feeling, no longer able to support the sight, cried, * *Tandem define, carnifex.* “ Executioner, “ will you never have done?” *Tandem* shews Mæcenas’s impatience, and that the exclamation burst from his soul. Augustus, no less struck with the animation of his minister’s manner, than with the force of his

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expression,

* The boldest word that ever was said to a Sovereign. The famous Duke de Crillon’s answer to Henry the Fourth of France, though in a different style, was very bold too. When the duke came one day into the circle, the king said, *Voilà le plus brave homme de mon royaume.* Crillon replied directly; *Vous avez menti, Sire, c'est vous.*

expression, instantly left the amphitheatre, and never returned to it again.

What was this but a lesson of taste? When they came home, what Mæcenas said to him I cannot tell. I know his * text, I know it was a good one; and I have reason to believe he handled it like a master. I say *I have reason to believe*, because I know the character of Augustus changed. Mæcenas inspired him with a love of the arts, gave him a taste for the compositions and society of men of letters, and, to the great advantage both of his subjects and of his memory, converted a cruel tyrant into a mild and beneficent monarch.

* “Tandem define, carnifex.”

LETTER XII.

I HAVE said * already, that taste is a combination of judgment and feeling. Its province is to chuse and to reject. A man of genius sits down to compose. He often rushes into matter from a sudden impulse; but oftener his fancy grows heated by degrees. He writes a phrase, and leans upon his elbow; he thinks a while, and then he finds another idea. As his imagination works, it warms; he starts from his seat, and walks about his room: ideas and images crowd faster on him than he is able to write them down. This is not the moment for taste to be employed. Let him not check the current of his thoughts, but write them all in the disorder in which they come. The torrent, he may be sure, will bring rubbish along with it; the office of taste is to clear this rubbish away. He should then examine with scrupulous severity the lines that he has written,

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to

* Letter XXIV. Vol. II. of "Letters from an English Traveller."

to preserve the true, the noble, and the fine ; and to reject the low, the common, and the false. Sha'speare wrote in the manner I have described ; but he rarely read over what he had written.

When Milton read over his episode of Sin and Death, had his taste been pure, he would have thrown it in the fire ; but he was in love with some real beauties in it ; and for their sake he pardoned its disgusting defects.

One should imagine that taste was not so difficult to be acquired ; and yet how many capital writers are there who want it ! Or rather indeed how few are there who possess it ! Its grand points are contained in a very narrow compass ; they lie in two words, truth and decency ; *quid verum atque decens*. Its minutenesses are as impossible to be pointed out as they are to be enumerated. The man who never has a word or phrase that violates decency or truth, will never have a gross fault of bad taste in his works. But there are different degrees of good taste. To possess the highest (as Lord Bristol does) one must unite an unerring judgment to exquisite sensibility.

Every faculty of man is perfected by practice. He acquires a justness in his ear, a chasteness in his eye, a strength in his judgment, and a vivacity and delicacy in his feelings, by frequent use of those several senses and powers. Few men are born without feeling, and consequently without a possibility of having taste. As judgment can only be the result of knowledge, to form it requires time and labour; and unless the judgment be just, the more feeling a man has, the falser his taste will be. To support this idea, I mention the Italians, who have great feeling; but, not having principles or right grounds to judge on, have the falsest and most extravagant notions of any people in Europe. I speak here of the nation in general, and of their taste for poetry in particular.

I do not write for men of the world, who are already formed, or for men of letters, many of whom are able to instruct me. I address myself only to uninstructed youth. To form the judgment of a young man to any art, poetry for example, let him read none but the best books of the chaste writers. Let TRUTH and DECENCY be his leading principles. Let Boileau, Horace, and Longinus be his perpetual

perpetual guides. They are the great legislators of taste. They have said every thing; but as, *in consequence of their good taste*, they have comprised their sense in a small compass, they must be read often to be completely understood. Sometimes a line, sometimes a word is pregnant with meaning. To comprehend them clearly, they must be meditated on.

Those three critics well digested, and joined to the reading of Homer, Sophocles, Virgil, Tasso, Metastasio, Racine, Pope and Addison, will form a perfect taste. A competent knowledge of all those languages, and that taste I speak of, may be acquired in infinitely less time than is generally imagined.

LETTER XIII.

THEY say the present generation is bad; and they assure us the next will be worse. I do not know how true that may be; but I will venture to assert, that every young person who reads this Letter till he has fixed the principles it contains firmly in his mind, will be the better for it as long as he lives.

This Letter, dear young Sir, will shew neither wit, taste, nor talents in me; it will only shew labour. It will be a short compilation of principles, drawn from my three favourite critics, to help you to form your taste. I flatter myself that by this I may do you real service; because I am persuaded, if I make your taste better, I shall make your morals better; and if I make your morals better, I shall make you happier.

For fear you should not feel the full force of the compliment I pay you in compiling for you, I must assure you that it costs me much less trouble to write than to quote. While I draw from myself, writing

is

is a pleasure to me. While I copy from others, it is exceedingly tiresome; and while I am searching for what is to be copied, it costs me both time and toil.

There is a very intimate connection between the arts. When you are capable of judging poetry perfectly, you will be able, with very little application, to acquire a just taste in the others. My object, then, is to give you some general principles by which you may be enabled to judge most poetical compositions with tolerable justness, and to feel a certain degree of pleasure from their beauties. I suppose that you understand yet no language intimately but English.

The three great points on which good taste depends are TRUTH *, DECENCY, and GOOD SENSE †. If a line is ever so pleasing to the ear by its harmony, or ever so dazzling to the imagination by brilliancy of thought or splendour of expression, if it

offends

* "Quid verum atque decens"

"Rien n'est beau que le vrai, le vrai seul est
" aimable."

"Tout doit tendre au bon sens."

† These are words which I have often mentioned; but they cannot be too often repeated.

offends sound sense, decency, or truth, it is not a good line.

Consider what a poet is. He is not a person who by mechanical labour makes faultless verses. The man alone deserves this honourable distinction, who is possessed of genius; who has a superior portion of enthusiasm, of that ethereal spirit which Horace calls *divine*, and who has a capability of saying great and elevated * things.

Examine if your poet is naturally † vehement and sublime: if he is full of † *happy boldness*:

* “ *Ingenium cui sit, cui mens divinior, atque os magna sonaturum, des nominis hujus honorem.* ”

Os magna sonaturum is generally thought to refer to expressions. If I understand Latin, *magna* can refer only to things.

† “ *Naturā sublimis & acer.* ”

† “ *Feliciter audet.* ”

You must pay particular attention to the word *happy*. When Tullus insults Coriolanus, by calling him,

“ *Thou boy of tears!* ”
the Roman answers;

“ *Boy! false slave,* ”

“ *If you have writ your annals true, 'tis there* ”

“ *That, like an eagle in a dove-coat, I* ”

“ *Flutter'd your Volscians in Corioli.* ”

Flutter'd is extremely bold, but very happily so.
When this metaphor is examined, it is found to be

boldness: if there is a spirited energy and force both in his words and * things.

Things here is a general term, which means thoughts, images, and sentiments.

It is not sufficient that a poem is † beautiful; that its matter and language are both unexceptionable; it must also be harmonious, interesting, and agreeable; and, what is of greater importance than all the rest, it must affect the reader, and kindle in his soul whatever passions or emotions it pleases.

Another

a very daring one; but it is so well introduced by the simile, and so fortunately placed, that it scarce appears to be a figurative expression; and that is an additional merit.

When Shakspeare makes Cæsar say;

“ Danger knows full well
“ That Cæsar is more dangerous than he;
“ We were two lions litter'd in one day,
“ And I the older and more terrible;”

he makes him say a most unhappy boldness. If you attend to the first principle, you can never mistake in deciding whether a thought or expression is happily bold, or the contrary. Bring it before the bar of Good Sense, and it determines instantly.

* — “ Acer spiritus ac vis

“ Et verbis et rebus ineſt.”

† “ Non satis est pulchra esse poemata, dulcia
“ ſunt;

“ Et quoconque volunt animum auditoris
“ agunto.”

Another point, which you are to consider as of particular importance, is the *object* of your poet. Did he mean *to please*, or *to instruct*? If he has succeeded in neither, he is of the last class; if he has succeeded in both, he is of the * first.

These are the principal points. I shall only add to them a definition of the Sublime taken from Boileau; its five sources mentioned by Longinus; and a description of it and of its effects, taken also from this same critic.

“ The sublime is a certain force in discourse, proper to elevate and transport the soul; and which proceeds either from grandeur of thought and nobleness of sentiment, or from magnificence of words, or an harmonious, lively, and animated turn of expression; that is to say, from any one of these particulars regarded separately; or, what makes the perfect sublime, from these three particulars joined together. . . .”

“ † The first and most excellent source of the *Sublime* is, a boldness and grandeur in the thoughts.

“ The

* “ Aut prodeesse volunt aut delectare poetæ:
“ Omne tulit punctum qui miscuit utile dulci.”

† Smith's Longinus.

“ The second is the *pathetic*, or the
“ power of raising the passions to a violent
“ and even enthusiastic degree.

“ The next consists in a skilful applica-
“ tion of figures.

“ The fourth is a noble and graceful
“ manner of expression.

“ The last is the structure or composition
“ of periods, in all possible dignity and
“ grandeur. . . .

“ . . . The mind is naturally elevated
“ by the true *Sublime*, and so sensibly af-
“ fected with its lively strokes, that it
“ swells in transport and an inward pride,
“ as if what was only heard had been the
“ product of its own invention.

“ He therefore, who has a competent
“ share of natural and acquired taste, may
“ easily discover the value of any per-
“ formance from a bare recital of it. If
“ he finds that it transports not his soul,
“ nor exalts his thoughts; that it calls not
“ up into his mind ideas more enlarged
“ than what the mere sounds of the words
“ convey, but on attentive examination
“ its dignity lessens and declines; he may
“ conclude, that whatever pierces no
“ deeper than the ears, can never be the
“ true *Sublime*. That on the contrary is
“ grand

" grand and lofty, which the more we
 " consider, the greater ideas we conceive
 " of it; *whose* force we cannot possibly
 " withstand; *which* immediately sinks
 " deep, and makes such impressions on the
 " mind, as cannot be easily worn out or
 " effaced. In a word, you may pronounce
 " *that* sublime, beautiful, and genuine,
 " which always pleases, and takes equally
 " with all sorts of men. For when persons
 " of different humours, ages, professions,
 " and inclinations, agree in the same joint
 " approbation of *any* performance, then
 " this union of assent, this combination of
 " so many different judgments, stamps an
 " high and indisputable value on *that* per-
 " formance, which meets with such general
 " * applause."

If Shakespeare had been a Sovereign, and Boileau, Horace, and Longinus had been three of his courtiers, I should have thought that every syllable quoted here, had been written on purpose to flatter him.

L E T.

* Whether the reader will thank me for this letter is more than I can tell; but I know it cost me a great deal of trouble.

LETTER XIV.

IN those letters upon wit, taste, and genius, you have observed that judgment is equally necessary to them all; that without it imagination runs riot, and feelings are false. I have called taste a union of judgment and feeling; wit, a combination of a sound judgment, and a lively fancy; and genius I have analysed into a glowing and vigorous imagination, operating upon a strong and solid judgment.

A man may have judgment without either wit, genius, or taste. He may have taste without wit or genius; wit without taste or genius; and genius without wit or taste. Happy the man who possesses the three; and happy is the author of the * School for Scandal.

Men have indisputably more genius than women; but as far as I have been able to judge from what I have seen of the world,
women

* There is, in my mind, more genius in the Screen-Scene than in any play of Voltaire's; and Voltaire's theatre is his fort.

women have more aptitude for wit and taste than men. I do not say they have more wit and taste, but I say they have more aptitude for them. Their fancies are livelier; their feelings finer. The point they fail in is judgment. But judgment comes from culture. If women had nearly the same pains taken to form their understandings that men have, I am persuaded they would be superior to men in taste and wit.

Of all the countries I know or have read of, England is that which has produced the greatest Geniuses, and the greatest number of Geniuses; France has produced the finest * Wits; and Athens the persons of the most perfect taste.

L E T-

* The country which has produced the finest Wits, after France, is Ireland. You laugh, perhaps, because it is a native of that country who writes this phrase. You'll cease to laugh, when you read the names of Congreve, Swift, Farquhar, Sterne, Goldsmith, Howard, Jephson, Burke, and Sheridan.

LETTER XV.

VI RTUE, propriety, and pleasure lie in the middle: don't they, Madam? There is a certain central point in which * rectitude is placed, and above or below which are error and absurdity. Prudence, for example, is the mean between cunning and folly; dignity, between abject humility and forbidding pride; courage, between cowardice and ferocity; and delicacy, which is to be the subject of this letter, lies, if I mistake not, between squeamishness and indecency.

Delicacy, the daughter of Chastity, is no more known in Italy than her mother. She is known in France, but not so well as she is in England. *Why* † English women

* "Est modus in rebus, sunt certi denique fines,
" Quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rec-
" tum."

† The women of England are superior to those of France in delicacy, dignity, and deep sensibility. The French ladies are superior to the English in wit, grace, vivacity, and amiableness. I would be understood here, as every where else, to speak with

women should be superior to all others in this point I cannot tell, more than I can why they have better shapes, better skins, and more agreeable speaking voices. Perhaps the general reason is, because they are chaster. Delicacy is only a refinement of decency; and decency is the inseparable companion of chastity. You will ask why are they chaster? Because they have a colder climate, more pride, juster notions about religion, and because they receive better *educations. A girl of condition is much better educated here than any where else. Her mother teaches her nothing but virtue and decorum, both by precept and example. She is also extremely attentive to the females that come about her daughter,

and

with exceptions. I have known women in France possess all the great qualities that adorn the English ladies; and women in England full of all the captivating qualities that belong to the ladies of France. Dignity and amiableness are the great points that distinguish the women of those two countries. An English woman of birth values herself on supporting her *dignity*; a French woman of the highest rank piques herself on being *amiable*. It is extremely difficult to unite dignity and amiableness. Lady Clermont unites them. *

* There is another reason, and a very strong one, why women are chaster in England than elsewhere, but every body knows it.

* Her Ladyship was Frenchwoman

and to the company she keeps. Children study countenances ; and a mother's look, on an expression dropped before her, is a lesson of delicacy, or the contrary, to her child. I have observed that English mothers pay a most particular attention to this point *.

In this country few women of condition or character err in conversation against the strictest decency either of thought or of expression. For one who trespasses against delicacy in company, there are twenty who deaden society by prudery and squeamishness. These are either a particular class of women, who turn pale when the word *love* is mentioned, or the idea hinted ; or they are affected women, who value themselves upon their superior nicety in this point, and then they are really insupportable. These dragons in delicacy do

* I do not know how an English woman would have answered the question put by a French girl of ten years old to her mother : " Pray, Mama, what's the difference between an Italian singer and a man ? " — " The same difference, my dear, that there is between a bull and an ox." — " And pray, Mama, what's that ? " — " Why, my love, the bull is the father of the calf ; and the ox is his uncle."

do not consider that love is a very innocent as well as a very amiable passion ; that all the ideas belonging to it are pleasing ; and that a word in conversation which just lightens upon you, and raises a train of agreeable images, is not only not reprehensible, but deserves praise, because it chears and animates society. God knows there is sadness and dullness enough in the world, it is cruel to preclude any harmless gaiety ; and such surely is all gaiety which does not inflame the passions, nor raise any gross ideas.

People who live by themselves, or who live only *for* themselves, may act as they please ; but all those who come into society ought to consider that they owe something *to* society, and that the most useful and agreeable contribution they can offer it is innocent pleasure. I say the most useful, because I am firmly persuaded that he who gives innocent pleasure does good ; moral and physical good.

The reverse is equally true. The person who brings a gloom into company damps the vivacity of that company, checks the motion of their spirits, retards, to a certain degree, the circulation of their blood, and does them positive harm. These are

are minute points; and the world in general will not feel them; nor will a robust man, in full health, feel the truth of the example I am going to mention. Suppose a woman of a delicate constitution has supped well, and that a cheerful friend comes in when she has done, and chats an hour with her; I say that woman will sleep well, and will have a good digestion. Suppose the friend that enters is a gloomy and melancholy character; it is a hundred to one but this lady's rest is broken; and that she has a head-ach the next day.

Squeamishness is certainly a smaller fault than indelicacy; but it *is* a fault, and a very disagreeable one. *True delicacy* lies between; equally remote from levity and moroseness.

LETTER XVI.

WOMEN are the source of much good as well as of much evil to the world. To them men owe delicacy ; and it is for that reason I went up to them as the fountain from which true delicacy flowed ; and I believe all that I said of that quality in them, is equally just when applied to writing.

It is not then a little surprising that, English women being indisputably superior to all others in this point, English writers should err against it so flagrantly and so universally. Except a very few, there is scarce a man who has had the least pretension to wit that can be read by any person of common decency, not to speak of people of a refined taste. Their grand leading ideas seem to be, that ribaldry is wit ; that wit is charming, and that therefore, &c. Now wit is charming, and ribaldry *may* be witty ; but I will tell these writers that the wittiest ribaldry never did, nor ever *can* please but readers of debauched morals and vitiated tastes. Nay, even a man of

loose

loose morals, if he has any taste, though he may be pleased at the *first* reading of an indecent piece of wit, will be disgusted with it at the second.

Not to mention numbers that are scandalously indecent, how shocking to delicacy are several of the most celebrated and admired writers we have ! How shamelessly have Congreve, Vanburgh, and Sterne in his *Tristram Shandy*, indulged themselves in writings worthy only of the lowest authors ! One is sorry for it in such men as these, because they had real talents ; but we may affirm safely, that it was in the moments in which they wanted talents they were forced to substitute indecency for wit. A sort of proof of this is, that there is no species of writing in which it is so easy to excel ; and that we see the very dregs of talents, all over the world, who are capable of nothing else, succeed wonderfully in this. I am glad I have lived to see the day that these mens works are fallen into the disrepute they merit. A single man, when he has real abilities, is capable of producing an astonishing effect on the taste of a nation. Such a man does now exist. I see he has already opened the eyes of many ; for even the multitude only admire

bad

bad till they see better; and I will venture to prophesy, that if Mr. Sheridan produces a few other pieces equal to the *School for Scandal*, the representations of Congreve and Vanburgh will not be supported even by the galleries.

I shall not sulley the purity of my page by quotations from these authors. Their faults are rocks above the surface of the sea, which the most unskilful mariner must see, and may avoid if he pleases. But I am forced to quote some passages, which, though they do not offend good morals, are a strong violation of delicacy of taste. I could wish that those sheets contained nothing but beauties. I quote defects with reluctance. But these rocks are beneath the surface; and if he is not warned, the youthful pilot may easily be wrecked. The author I mean principally to quote, had all the advantages a writer could possess. His birth was noble, and his talents great; born in an enlightened age, he lived habitually with its greatest ornaments. Nothing was wanting that could exalt his imagination, or refine his taste. He was full of learning, and full of labour. No man ever paid more attention to his style. Is it not then amazing that a secretary
of

of state, the most splendid luminary of his time, the dazzling and all-accomplished Bolingbroke, should often descend to the language of the stews, and debase his writings by images that would have been condemned for vulgarity in the mouth of his footman? *Bawd, bully, whore*, are the terms he makes use of; particularly the two last, in his *Idea of a Patriot King*, his most elaborate performance; and the last of those three words I have quoted he uses at the end of that Letter, in the midst of a dissertation on decorum, decency, propriety, and grace. Could *he* be ignorant that those expressions, which decency forbade him to utter in the hearing of his Sovereign, or of any woman, or even man that he respected; could *he*, I say, want to be informed, that what was an insult to the ear, was not less an insult to the eye? and that what decorum forbade him to speak, decorum also forbade him to write?

There are men who will defend these expressions. They will say they are forcible and energetic. I grant they are, and that is a reason why they should be used; but they are indecent, and that is a stronger reason why they should *not* be used. In every

every instance the proper terms are the strongest ; but when they violate decency, no writer of taste ever employed them.

The truth is, man is an imitative animal. He copies, in despight of himself, the beings that surround him. Lord Bolingbroke was generally in the society of Nobles like himself, and his style and ideas then resemble his society. But Lord Bolingbroke was a man ; he sometimes forgot his dignity ; and his treacherous writings betray him to the world, and shew that he degraded himself in the company of harlots, who eclipsed for a time the rays of a most glorious and brilliant imagination.

In another place this great writer talks, by *allusion*, “ of a race who carry on their “ skins, exposed to public sight, the *scabs* “ and *blotches* of their distemper.” Every thing may be defended ; and that, it may be said, is palpable and striking. The thing, in nature, was never seen without loathing the beholder. Can then the image of it be offered without disgusting the reader ?

I do not know a more offensive idea than this last, except one which he has in his second Letter on the *Study of History*.—

“ And the Hottentot, who returned from

VOL. I. E “ Europe,

"Europe, stripped himself naked as soon
 "as he came home, put on his bracelets
 "of guts and garbage, and grew stinking
 "and lousy as fast as he could." My God !
 what writing is this ! But no, Lord Boling-
 broke, I acquit you of these nauseous
 images, and of these indecent expressions.
 I blame you only for the choice of your
 company. The Women of the Town are
 to be censured for the one ; the * Dean of
 St. Patrick is to be condemned for the
 other.

* Swift had great parts ; but the author of the *Lady's Dressing-Room* never suspected there was such an idea as *Delicacy of Taste*. He ought to have followed Lear's advice, and to have taken a great deal of civet to sweeten his imagination.

LETTER XVII.

THOUGH Lord Bolingbroke made a slip now and then, he was upon the whole a man of fine taste : so was Pope, and so was Addison. Addison, in my mind, had the best and surest taste of the three. He begins one of his Spectators with a stroke of wit, that one must be squeamish indeed to quarrel with. "Though 'a monosyllable,'" says he, "be my de-light." Now that is charming, Madam : it is a man that speaks ; and what makes it admirable is, that it would have been equally good if it had been a woman ; because *you know* the monosyllable meant is—*love*. Some of Pope's strokes are not so Attic ; in the Rape of the Lock, where he talks of bodies changed to different forms by spleen, he says,

" Men prove with-child as powerful fancy
" works,
" And maids turn'd bottles, call aloud for
" corks :"

Poor, paltry, pitiful ! As Swift corrupted Bolingbroke, so Bolingbroke corrupted

Pope. This is despicable ; nor is the original of this turn, wretched as it is, his own ; so that he not only stole, but stole awkwardly. He would have been condemned for that theft both at Athens and at Sparta.

A little farther on he is happier. Belinda closes her lamentation for the loss of her Lock with these lines :

“ Oh ! hadst thou cruel been content to
“ seize

“ Hairs less in sight, or any hairs but
“ these.”

I have known many squeamish people translate that into indelicacy : that is their fault, and not the author's : it is *not* indecent ; it is fair, light, elegant, gay. It puts me in mind of an answer given by a sprightly French girl to the Duke de Roquelaure. As he was passing through Toulouse, he saw her at a ball ; he was struck with her figure, and desired one of his *aids de camp* to tell her she was beautiful as an angel, and that he would give fifty guineas for a single hair under her eyebrows ; meaning, I suppose, one of her eye-lashes. “ Give my compliments to “ the duke,” says she ; “ tell him I am “ happy to have pleased him ; but that I
“ am

" am not a retail-merchant (*une marchande en détail*) ; if he chuses the whole at that price, he shall have them with pleasure."

Shakspeare has many strokes that are exquisitely delicate. His plays are full of the coarsest and grossest things ; but every body knows how many excuses *he* had. I shall quote two passages, which come into my mind now, in support of what I have advanced. If I looked for others, I am sure I should find enough.

Ophelia tells Hamlet she had remembrances of his, which she wished to give him back.

" Hamlet. I never gave you aught.

" Ophelia. My honour'd Lord, you
" know right well, you did ;

" And with them words of such sweet breath
" compos'd,

" As made the things more rich : that per-
" fume loft,

" Take these again."

The other example is in the fourth act of Othello.

" Æmilia. Alas, Iago, my Lord had
" so bewhor'd her,

" Thrown such despight and heavy terms
" upon her,

" That true hearts cannot bear it.

" Desdemona.

“ Desdemona. *Am I that name, Iago?*

“ Iago. What name, fair Lady?

“ Des. *Such as she said my Lord did say I
“ was.*”

Richardson is admirable for every species of delicacy; for delicacy of * wit, sentiment, image, language, action, every thing. I doubt whether he has once erred against this point in all his works, unless where he intended to do it. I mean by *characteristic* traits. It might be disputed whether it is allowable even there. I remember a stroke of wit of his that appeared to me to be refined and delicate to a very high degree. “ Lovers,” says Miss Byron, “ like spaniels, “ will fawn at your feet, or be ready to “ leap into your lap.” That is the touch of a master.

L E T-

* The French writers and French women are superior to the women and writers of England in delicacy of wit; but inferior to them in delicacy of sentiment. Were I to mention a lady who joins refined wit to the most delicate sensibility, it should be—but I dare not name her—I am afraid of wounding her modesty—I know Lady Elizabeth Foster would blush at her panegyric; for,

“ Fast from herself she tremblingly retires,

“ Nor trusts that worth which all the world
“ admires.”

LETTER XVIII.

YOU have wit, taste, sense, and sentiment, and you don't like Richardson. Well, that is to me astonishing. He has but one great fault, and unfortunately every body feels it. The defect *might* be cured; and it is, in my opinion, an object well worthy the attention of the nation to have it remedied *.

Richardson's views were grand. His soul was noble, and his heart was excellent. He formed a plan that embraced all human nature. His object was to benefit mankind. His knowledge of the world shewed him

* If any *moral* object could be thought worthy the attention of the nation; or any object which tended towards a perfect system of education for youth, Richardson's genius was immense. His misfortune was, that he did not know the Ancients. Had he but been acquainted with one single principle, *Omne super-vacuum pleno de pectore manat*, (all superfluities tire); he would not have satiated his reader as he has done. There might be made out of Clarissa and Sir Charles Grandison two works, which would be *both* the most entertaining, *and* the most useful, that ever were written.

him that happiness was to be attained by man, only in proportion as he practised virtue. His good sense then shewed him that no *practical* system of morality existed ; and the same good sense told him that nothing but a body of morality, *put into action*, could work with efficacy on the minds of youth. Sermons and Essays, experience shewed him, were ineffectual. The manner of them was dry and uninteresting to young people ; and arguments addressed to what is weakest in youth, to their understandings, he clearly perceived, were without effect. He saw farther, that example was the great point which formed the young ; and he saw that man was composed of passions and imagination as well as of understanding.

Those were his general principles ; and upon those principles he reasoned thus : Mankind is naturally good, for it is rare to meet young people with bad hearts. A young man then coming into the world wishes to be perfect. But how shall he learn ? The world is a bad school ; and precepts scattered up and down in books of morality are of little use. An example would form him ; but where is it to be found ? None exists. I will then create one

one for him. I will set before him a model of perfection. The more he imitates it, the more perfect he will be; the more perfect he is, the happier he will be.

As he reasoned upon man, so he reasoned upon woman. He aimed at no less than bestowing felicity on the generation he saw rising before him, and on every one that was to succeed it. And had he not had powers to accomplish this aim, his wish was so grand, so noble, and of such a superior order of benevolence, that that alone would have entitled him to immortality; I had almost said canonisation.

But such is the perverseness and weakness of mankind, that what constitutes Richardson's greatest merit, is considered by many as a capital defect in his conception. They object, that such a woman as Clarissa, and such a man as Sir Charles Grandison, having never existed, the author has created palpable chimæras, and consequently his creations are useless and unaffected. How consistent are the reasonings of men! Century after century, and country after country, have vied with each other in praising the work and

the author of the Venus of Medici. Yet this work must be universally allowed to be farther from Nature than Richardson's Clarissa. No woman ever came near the beauty of this statue; yet, has that diminished the merits of the author? Has he not always been, and is he not hourly and justly admired for the ingenuity of his idea, though this idea is totally barren of profit to the world?

Not so with Clarissa; she must profit every female that beholds her. Though the whole of these two imaginary beings did evidently never exist, yet so great has been the mastery of these uncommon artists, that there is not a particle in the composition of the statue, nor a trait in the character or conduct of the heroine, that can be said to deviate in the minutest degree from the precise line of nature and of truth.

Richardson has done no more than animate the Venus of Medici. The Greecian sculptor had *created of every creature's best* a marble body: the English writer created equally *of every creature's best* a soul, a mind, a genius for that body. Can any man pretend to be consistent with himself, who admires the one, and

and condemns the other? Suppose the two the work of the Greek, and I will venture to say, this would have been the language of the world: "When the sculptor created that form, he surpassed men; but when he created that genius and that soul, he rivalled the Gods."

LETTER XIX.

THE writers of England excel those of all other nations in the pathetic; and Richardson in this point is, I think, superior to all his countrymen. He makes one cry too much: and by a very singular talent, peculiar to himself alone, he fills our eyes almost as often by elevated sentiments, as he does by tender ones. He abounds with strokes of greatness, sometimes in the actions and sometimes in the sentiments of his characters, which raise the reader's soul, and make the tear of generosity spring into his eye he knows not whence.

Here are three strokes of pathos; tell me which of them you like best.

When the tyrannical Capulet says to his daughter;

“ Thursday is near;
“ If you be mine, I'll give you to my friend:
“ If you be not, hang, beg, starve, die i'th
“ streets,
“ For by my foul! I'll ne'er acknowlege
“ thee.”

Then

Then Juliet ;

“ Is there no Pity sitting in the clouds,
“ That sees into the bottom of my grief ?
“ O sweet my mother, cast me not away.”

Is not that earnest appeal to heaven most solemnly moving ? and then that passionate address to her mother, as her only resource after Providence, is exceedingly affecting. The confusion too in placing her words, *O sweet my mother*, for *O my sweet mother*, is infinitely beautiful : it is somewhat like Virgil's *Me, me adsum qui feci.*

The next is from Otway. When Jaffier gives Belvidera to Renault, and gives him with her a dagger, desiring him, *when he proves unworthy, to strike it to her heart* ; Belvidera's answer is inimitably fine.

“ O thou unkind one !
“ Have I deserv'd this from you ?
“ Look on me, tell me,
“ Why am I separated from thy love ?
“ If I am false, accuse me ; but, if true,
“ Don't, pr'ythee, don't in poverty forsake me,
“ But pity the sad heart that's torn with
“ parting.”

No man can write better than this. That line, “ Don't, pr'ythee, don't *in poverty* forsake me,” is above praise. Every word of it is a beauty. The words “ *but* ” if

"*if true,*" introduce this affecting close with peculiar happiness, because the audience, knowing that she *is* true, feels more deeply for her sorrows.

The third is from Clarissa. After she has escaped from Lovelace, and is lodged at a Glove-shop, King-Street, Covent-Garden, she writes a letter to her nurse, Mrs. Norton, in which are these words : "I am afraid *my Poor*, as I used to call the "good creatures to whose necessities I was "wont to administer by your faithful "hands, have missed me of late. But "now, alas ! I am poor myself." When Clarissa's story is known, and the whole of her character, and her present situation considered, "*But now, alas ! I am poor myself,*" is irresistible *.

I do

* It is injuring Richardson to quote a trait of pathos from him, when he has whole volumes which it is impossible to read without crying and sobbing from beginning to end.

I feel for the injustice that is done this author, who, I will venture to assert, is second to no man that ever wrote. It is astonishing, however, how many men of parts I have met with who speak of him with contempt. Most of them, it is true, have condemned him without reading him ; and they have condemned him because he is a writer of *Novels* or *Romances*. What is a name ? What signifies

I do not believe any language, ancient or modern, can shew three traits equal to these.

L E T-

fies how a work is called ; whether it is a Romance, a Novel, a Story, or a History ? No matter for the title ; examine the work. Does it grapple the attention (to use Shakspeare's expression) with hooks of steel ? Does it move, does it elevate, does it enlighten, does it amuse ? These are the points to be enquired into, and not how it is called.

I have known many other clever people, who have dipped into Clarissa, and who hold it and its author very cheap. Some of these men have gone through a volume or two, others have read a number of Letters here and there, have then formed their opinions of its merits, and thrown away the book. Richardson's object was not to write a volume or a letter ; it was to make a work. If the entire work be not examined, it is impossible to judge it. He built a palace. The stair-case is too high : if it had fewer steps, it would be better. One tires sometimes before one gets to the head of it. But go on ; enter into the apartments ; observe their distribution, their proportion, their effect ; see their ensemble ; examine their Whole ; and then answer, if ever there was an edifice equal to it for beauty, grandeur, sublimity, and magnificence. There never was in any country. The introduction into the story of Clarissa is a *leettle* too long ; but when you pass that, there never was a story equally interesting, or equally affecting ; and I assert, without dread of being contradicted by any man of taste and talents *who reads it through*, that there does not exist, in the universe, a work *equal* to it for WIT, SENTIMENT and SENSE.

LETTER XX.

A Number of the first wits at Paris being assembled at the house of a famous Lady *Bel Esprit*, talked naturally enough of literature. The elevation of Corneille, and the pathos of Racine, the purity of Boileau, and the depth of Moliere, were supported by different advocates. At last says one, suppose we were all this instant to be carried to the Bastile, and doomed to pass there the remainder of our days: suppose that we were suffered to have, each, any author's works that we chose; but that we were never to be permitted to make a second choice; who is the author each man would chuse, to cheer the dreariness of a perpetual solitude? Let no one speak, but let every man write the name of the author he would prefer. They all wrote the same name. It was that of La Fontaine. A greater compliment, I suppose, never was paid a writer.

Had a similar question been put at London among English Wits, I fancy Shakspere would have been named: In modern

modern Rome, it would have been Ariosto: in ancient Rome, I believe, it would have been Horace.

La Fontaine appears to me to be the Correggio of Poetry. The Graces conducted the pen of the one, as they did the pencil of the other. They have both negligences and inaccuracies, which they seem not to have troubled themselves about. La Fontaine wrote a Fable; when he read it, says he, there's a syllable too much in that line; to correct it, I must change a word; that word expresses happily my meaning: if I lose it, I lose a beauty; and I gain a faultless, but insipid line. One beauty compensates six faults: the fault and the beauty shall both rest. My line hobbles; but that word shall impress a sentiment on the heart, or present a picture to the imagination.

Correggio painted his Night. His object was the Virgin and Child. The canvas was large; and, says he, I must fill it. What shall I put in the top? why some angels: so he has scattered three or four sprawling figures in the top of the picture. These, I suppose, he painted in a morning, and never meant they should be looked at. If the eye wanders to any other part
of

of my canvass, thought he, it will not fix there, it will soon come back to my Child and Virgin. I meant to put my force *there*, to shew there the magic powers of my pencil; and I disregard the suffrage of any man who is capable of condemning me for weakness, where I did not mean to be strong. If I have a leg ill-disposed, or a finger ill-drawn, it is because I did not think the drawing of that finger, or the disposition of that leg, of any importance. I sought effect. I strove to animate my cloth, to paint soul and grace, to charm the eye, to touch the heart, to enchant the imagination. Have I succeeded?

There never were two more amiable artists than those. There never were two artists whose works excited more agreeable sensations, nor whose productions appear to have cost them less. Ease and *naturalness** distinguish them equally. Other artists force you to admire them. These you feel yourself inclined to love. You are satisfied with knowing the works of other poets and painters; but you wish to have been acquainted with the persons of Correggio and

* I mean *naivete*.

and La Fontaine—*O fortunati ambo! si quid mea—*

As I have said Correggio is the La Fontaine of painting, so I think Albano is its Anacreon, Raphael its Virgil, and Rubens its Homer.

L E T-

LETTER XXI.

MADAME de la Sabliere, a woman of condition in France, who shared with Lewis the Fourteenth the honour of patronising La Fontaine, used to call him her Fable-tree (*son Fablier.*) She said he produced fables spontaneously as an apple-tree does apples. That is very prettily said. And the natural ease which runs through all his works, proves that this saying is as sensible as pretty.

The French are, with great reason, proud of this writer. The only author who can expect his works to live, is he who communicates instruction agreeably; who forms to himself a system of never departing from strict truth, and of presenting pictures, drawn only from Nature, in an agreeable and pleasing point of view. This author is La Fontaine. He is an insinuating moralist, who, while he seems only to think of amusing his reader, steals into his heart the mildest and most amiable virtues. His sense is always just; but he had the art to dress philosophy with smiles, and to render

render that goddess truly engaging, who seems only formed to command.

No mortal ever told a story better. Gaiety and good sense, reason and grace, are mixed in all his narrations; rapid, precise, and varied, he never astonishes, but never fails to charm. Reading his fables, you are surprised to find rhymes, for what you have read does not look like composition; it appears to be the language of an agreeable companion, who converses with ease, with elegance, and spirit.

To many a critic such a writer will appear superficial. They do not feel the superiority of talent that is requisite to convey luminous truths, and deep reflexions, with almost apparent carelessness. Because Wisdom *generally* wears a frown, they do not conceive that she can ever be taught to smile; and *that* which constitutes a writer's greatest merit, his being able to convey *interesting matter* in an *easy manner*, appears to them a proof of his inferiority. Enchanting La Fontaine! my model and my guide, dread not such judges: it is thy greatest glory, and will insure thy everlasting fame, that thou hast been able to attract thy reader by an easy brilliancy, and engage him afterwards by solid reason and profound morality.

LETTER XXII.

LA Fontaine was a singular character. His soul was as simple as his understanding was acute. On account of that simplicity, and of his being often absent in company, which gave him frequently an appearance of silliness, he was called by his contemporary wits *le bon homme*. You know this phrase is generally used by the French, when they speak of a good-natured man who has scarce common sense. As Boileau, Moliere, and Racine were one day walking together in the Park at Versailles, they saw La Fontaine perched up in a tree, where he was possibly composing a fable. Racine and Boileau began to laugh at him. "Don't laugh at him," says Moliere, "the *bon homme* will go farther than any of us." La Fontaine's hourly-encreasing fame proves the superiority of Moliere's penetration.

The object of this inimitable fabulist was to be useful: to be useful, he knew he must be agreeable: to be agreeable, he knew he must have variety. He fully attained

tained all his ends. He has so tissued wit, sense, and sentiment in his works, that he must please every species of readers. He has so many ideas, that, read him ever so often, he is always new. He has so many remarks which come home to every man's bosom, that he is always interesting. Like Horace, he is read with more pleasure as well as profit, in proportion as men advance in life. But a circumstance peculiar only to himself is, that the same fable which charms the formed philosopher, shall delight the thoughtless schoolboy and the giddy coquet.

“ Deux coqs vivoient en paix ; une Poule sur-
“ vint,

“ Et voilà la guerre allumée :

“ Amour, tu perdis Troye—”

How simple, how rapid that narration ! how lively, how graceful, how unexpected the apostrophe ! and with what inconceivable address has he introduced into his apostrophe a moral reflection ! See too how he has given dignity to his reflection, by bringing in the destruction of Troy. This is another of La Fontaine's secrets, to make a grand idea arise out of what is seemingly a frivolous situation. Here we are thinking only of two cocks, and by a single

single stroke of his pen we are placed in a superior order of things, and have brought before us the Iliad, the Æneid, Agamemnon, Priam, Helen, and Achilles.

Do me the pleasure to read that fable ; (*Les deux Coqs.*) You are lazy ; you'll not read ; otherwise I should recommend to you, *Les Animaux malades de la peste* ; *la Fille* ; *le Paysan du Danube* ; *le Chene & le Roseau* ; *le Chat, la Belette & le petit Lapin*. You are a good creature, but an indolent and dissipated one. Do then, indulge your indolence and me together, and abandon yourself a single evening to the luxury of your slippers, to read this child of nature, and favourite of the Graces.

One fable I am determined you *shall* read ; that is, provided you read me ; for here it is.

LES DEUX PIGEONS.

DEUX Pigeons s'aimoient d'amour tendre :
 L'un d'eux s'ennuyant au logis,
 Fut assez fou pour entreprendre
 Un voyage en lointain Pays.
 L'autre lui dit : qu'allez vous faire ?
 Voulez-vous quitter votre frere ?
 L'absence est le plus grand des maux ;
 Non pas pour vous, cruel. Au moins que les travaux,

Les

Les dangers, les soins du voyage,
Changent un peu votre courage.

Encor si la saison s'avançoit davantage !
Attendez les Zéphyrs : qui vous presse ? Un Corbeau
Tout-à-l'heure annonçoit malheur à quelqu' oiseau.
Je ne songerai plus que rencontre funeste,
Que Faucons, que rézeaux. Hélas ! dirai-je, il pleut :

Mon frere a-t-il tout ce qu'il veut,
Bon soupé, bon gîte, & le reste ?
Ce discours ébranla le cœur
De notre imprudent voyageur :

Mais le desir de voir, & l'humeur inquiete
L'emporterent enfin. Il dit : ne pleurez point :
Trois jours au plus rendront mon ame satisfaite
Je reviendrai dans peu conter de point en point
Mes aventures à mon frere.

Je le défennuierai : quiconque ne voit guere,
N'a guere à dire aussi. Mon voyage dépeint
Vous sera d'un plaisir extrême ;
Je dirai : j'étois là, telle chose m'avint :

Vous y croirez être vous-même.
A ces mots, en pleurant, ils se dirent adieu.
Le voyageur s'éloigne ; & voilà qu'un nuage
L'oblige de chercher retraite en quelque lieu.
Un seul arbre s'offrit, tel encor que l'orage
Maltraita le Pigeon en dépit du feuillage.
L'air devenu serein, il part tout morfondu,
Seche du mieux qu'il peut son corps chargé de pluies
Dans un champ à l'écart voit du bled répañdu,
Voit un Pigeon auprès, cela lui donne envie :
Il y vole, il est pris : ce bled couvroit d'un las

Les menteurs & traîtres appâts.
Le las étoit usé ; si bien que de son aile,
De ses pieds, de son bec, l'oiseau le rompt enfin :
Quelque plume y périt, & le pis du destin
Fut qu'un certain Vautour, à la ferre cruelle,

Vit notre malheureux, qui traînant la ficelle,
 Et les morceaux du las qui l'avoit attrapé,
 Sembloit un forçat échappé.

Le Vautour s'en alloit le lier, quand des nues
 Fond à son tour un Aigle aux aîles étendues.
 Le Pigeon profita du conflit des voleurs,
 S'envola, s'abattit auprès d'une masure,
 Crut pour ce coup que ses malheurs
 Finiroient par cette aventure :

Mais un fripon d'enfant, cet âge est sans pitié,
 Prit sa fronde, & du coup tua plus d'à moitié

La volatile malheureuse,
 Qui maudissant sa curiosité,
 Traînant l'aile, & tirant le pied,
 Demi morte, & demi boiteuse,
 Droit au logis s'en retourna :
 Que bien que mal elle arriva,
 Sans autre aventure fâcheuse.

Voilà nos gens rejoints ; & je laisse à juger
 De combien de plaisirs ils payerent leurs peines.

Amants, heureux amants, voulez-vous voyager ?

Que ce soit aux rives prochaines,
 Soyez-vous l'un à l'autre un monde toujours beau,
 Toujours divers, toujours nouveau :
 Tenez-vous lieu de tout, comptez pour rien le reste.
 J'ai quelquefois aimé : je n'aurois pas alors,

Contre le Louvre & ses trésors,
 Contre le firmament & sa voûte céleste,
 Changé les bois, changé les lieux,
 Honorés par les pas, éclairés par les yeux
 De l'aimable & jeune Bergere,
 Pour qui, sous le fils de Cythere,
 Je servis engagé par mes premiers ferniens.
 Hêlas ! quand reviendront de semblables moments ?
 Faut-il que tant d'objets si doux & si charmants

Me laissent vivre au gré de mon ame inquiete ?
 Ah ! si mon cœur osoit encor se renflammer !
 Ne sentirai-je plus de charme qui m'arrête ?

Ai-je passé le temps d'aimer ?

Is that charming ? It is indeed indescribably so. But La Fontaine's beauties need not be pointed out ; like Lady * Hervey's, they are felt as soon as seen.

* In this age of goddesses and angels, when almost every woman is a Juno, a Venus, or a tenth Muse, this Lady can pretend to little merit. She is neither an angel nor a goddess. She is only a very pretty Woman, very sensible, very amiable, and very well-bred.

LETTER XXIII.

TO MY FRIEND AT PARIS.

YOU cannot conceive the notions the common people of England have of your countrymen. When the maid (a very ugly woman) came into my room this morning to make my fire, I asked her my two usual questions : What's o'clock ? and, what sort of day is it ? Sir, says she, it is past nine ; a very cold morning ; and, the Lord's holy name be ever blessed and praised, God is above the Devil still, the French are all killed ! *All?* says I. *All,* says she. I could not conceive what she meant !—I don't understand you.—Sir, here's the story ; I heard it this moment from a very genteel gentleman, a very pretty * gentleman indeed, in the grocer's shop, where I went to buy some sugar for my mistress. The Count d'Estangus, Sir, brought

* When Salisbury tells Lady Constance that Lewis is to be married to Blanch, and that France is to make peace with England, she answers ; Fellow, be gone ; I cannot brook thy sight : This news hath made thee a most ugly man.

brought the whole French fleet to the Island of Jarseys, and made a landing of twenty thousand men ; but the brave British boys (and she was almost crying with pleasure) fell upon them, and did not leave a mother's babe of them alive.—How many brave British boys were there ? Sir, there was but fifteen hundred.—Why that was a very small number to kill twenty thousand men. Sir, they were only Frenchmen ! oh, they are a dastardly set of dogs ; they are daunted in a minute, Sir : but indeed it's no wonder, for you know they never eats but fallad and frogs. But they must be fools too as well as cowards ; for what brought them there ? Didn't they know they'd be kilt ? Yes, they know'd it well enough ; for they no sooner got their legs on the ground, than off they run'd like a flock of geese.—But you seem to be very violent against the French : did they ever do *you* any harm ? No, Sir, they never did me any harm in partiklar ; but I can't bear the name of them ; I hate them worse than toads ; and every true-born Englishwoman and Englishman too ought to hate them as much as I do. Don't they come over here to dress hair, and cook, and skip and dance, and dance away with our money, and

suck

suck the very blood out of this poor country ? It is a shame for the nobility to encourage them as they do ; so it is. I wish the mob had killed them all when they burnt the chapels, for a nasty papish crew as they are : yes, Sir, they are all papishes, and locuses, and caterpillars, and varmin.—Lord knows when her eloquence would have ended, if I had not told her I wanted to get up.

This is the only country in the world where every human being is a politician. The lower classes of people here do not talk politics by way of amusement, as in other countries ; they take a real-hearted interest in every thing that is going forward. It is equal to them whether the subject is foreign or domestic ; whether it is possible for them to know any thing of it or not ; they catch a corner of it, their heads heat, they support their opinions by the most furious oratory, and when words fail them, they very frequently come to blows.

As I was passing through a court that leads into the Strand, a few days after the election for the City of Westminster was over, I heard a woman cry, Murder. A crowd had got into the entry ; and I asked
a man

a man that was there, what was the matter? It is a carpenter, says he, that is beating his wife, and who has been beating her these three days. That, said I, is very cruel: why is he suffered to beat her? O, Sir, she deserves it; she never lets the poor man have a moment's peace; she has been tormenting him this great while about his vote; and this is the cause of the quarrel: he voted for Lord Lincoln; and she wanted him to vote for *Charles * Fox*. Well, but said I, she ought to be quiet now, the election is over, and Mr. Fox has succeeded. That, Sir, is the reason her husband has been beating her ever since. She is continually *crowing* over him, and telling him that he is a dirty dog, that he wanted to enslave his country; but that, thanks be to God, the City of Westminster will be free in spite of him.

I was thinking after, where this woman had got the idea of preserving the liberty of the City of Westminster; and recollected that it must have been from the song of the day,

* When a man here, by great talents or any other extraordinary merit, becomes a favourite, he frequently loses the title of Mister. Charles Fox and Horace Walpole are much oftener talked of, and better known, than Mr. Walpole or Mr. Fox.

day, which I had heard at the hustings, and which I had bought. It was, as you may suppose, outrageously violent against the ministry, and every verse ended with this chorus, to the tune of Langolee :

“ Now is the time, my brave fellows,
“ an ever,
“ We'll honour for Fox and Rodney for
“ ever,
“ And join heart and hand in a *noble en-*
“ *deavour,*
“ For setting the City of Westminster
“ free.”

The poetry you see is brilliant, the rhymes rich, the sentiments great, and the music popular. The whole, I dare say, contributed not a little towards enflaming the brain of this patriotic female.

P. S. It is worth your while to come to England, were it only to see an election and a cock-match. There is a celestial spirit of anarchy and enthusiasm in these two scenes, that words cannot paint, and of which no countryman of yours can ever form an idea.

LETTER XXIV.

IMade two observations in my travels; one, that the people of every country make something well; the other, that every nation has a peculiar manner of ruining itself. The English ruin themselves by play; the French, by women; the Irish, by hospitality; the Swiss, by drinking; and the Germans, by a multitude of servants. I should not have said *every*, I should have said *almost* every. The Italians don't ruin themselves, because they are ruined already. However, individuals among them *do*; some Milanese, for example, by eating; some Venetians, by gallantry and gaming; some Neapolitans, by equipages and embroidery; and several Romans, by every species of impurity. Neither do the Dutch ruin themselves; it is not, however, because they are already ruined; but because they are too phlegmatic to ruin themselves any way. The few who *do* destroy themselves, do it by avarice, by lending money at exorbitant interest on bad securities.

There are Dutchmen too who ruin themselves by flowers. I do not guaranty the truth of this anecdote, though I heard it from persons of veracity in Holland. A man, whose passion was for flowers, and who had an uncommon fine tulip-root of a very particular kind, heard that another florist had one as fine as his. He purchased it from him for a sum of money so large, I dare not mention it; and when he had got it into his possession, he broke it to pieces with his heel, saying, "Now "there is not in the world another tulip- "root equal to mine."

Every nation excels too in making something. The French make gold and silver stuffs and political lyes better than any people in the world. The Italians make ices, maccaroni, and religious lyes to admiration. The Saxons make excellent porcelaine. The Dutch are famous for making sea-landscapes. The Flemish, for making lace. And the English—why the English, I think, make men and women better than any nation I know.

There is a better race of men and women in England than I have ever seen in any other country. If any one asks me *why* if is so; I answer, I can't tell. If he asks me

me how I *know* that it is so ; I answer, by looking at them. There is also a better race of dogs * and horses here than in any other country I have seen ; but there are too a great many garrons and curs.

P. S. Well, reader, you are an unsuspecting creature. With what easy good-nature did you walk into the trap I laid for you ! How were you delighted at hearing me call marine views, *sea-landscapes* ! The blundering Irishman ! I'll be sworn, you smiled ; and that because you thought yourself cleverer than me. Now that you are not quite so *sure* of your superiority, perhaps you look grave.

* Not to speak of a great many very promising puppies..

LETTER XXV.

PRAY, Sir, said I to a Frenchman in the playhouse, is that the third act that is ended? "Yes, Sir," says he, "that is the third act that is ended; it is the fourth which is going to begin." His answer struck me; this man, said I to myself, has answered my question thrice: yes, Sir; once—it is the third act that is ended; twice—it is the fourth which is going to begin, was a third answer. We entered into conversation, and I found him a very sensible man.

At supper, that night, I told a lady the answer I had received, and that it had surprised me. Why? said she. Had he asked *me* the question, Madam, I should have thought him answered with, Yes, Sir. He was a politer man than you are, says she. You are a Spartan; he was an Athenian. I felt foolish. I don't see, Madam, how he was politer than I should be: my answer gave all the information necessary to be given; to say it thrice was superfluous.—True, Sir; but your *Oui*,

Monsieur,

Monsieur, would have been harsh (*dur*). It is only as much as you are *obliged* to say. It is cutting a man short, and telling him you don't desire any farther conversation with him. Whereas, by seeming to interest yourself in the question he asks you, and taking some pains to give him the fullest answer you can, you shew a desire to oblige him, to continue a conversation with him, and encourage him (particularly if he be a stranger) to speak to you again. I found that she was perfectly in the right; for his answer had exactly the effect on me that she described. This is *a nothing*: I mention it as such; but it is very essential to be known by every traveller who wishes to render himself agreeable to foreigners. It is also a characteristic trait of the French nation.

LETTER XXVI.

IT is inconceivable how differently men talk about women in this world. Some say with Jaffier ;

Can there in women be such glorious faith ?
Sure all ill stories of thy sex are false.
Oh woman ! lovely woman ! Nature made thee
To temper man : we had been brutes without
you.

Angels are painted fair, to look like you :
There's in you all that we believe of Heav'n,
Amazing brightness, purity, and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love.

And some with * Caftalio ;

Woman, the fountain of all human frailty !
What mighty ills have not been done by woman ?
Who was't betray'd the Capitol ? A woman.
Who lost Mark Antony the world ? A woman :
Who was the cause of a long ten years war,
And laid at last old Troy in ashes ? Woman :
Destructive, damnable, deceitful woman.
Woman to man first as a blessing given,
When innocence and love were in their primes,
Happy a while in Paradise they lay,
But quickly woman long'd to go astray ;

Some

* Reader, are you a Jaffier or a Caftalio ?

[III]

Some foolish new adventure needs must prove,
 And the first devil she saw, she chang'd her
 love ;
 To his temptations lewdly she inclin'd
 Her soul, and for an apple damn'd mankind.

I remember twenty years ago I used to converse often on this subject, with a cousin of mine, an officer, who was a very wild young man. So opposite were our opinions on this head, that we never met, but we quarrelled. He swore " women " were as wily as serpents;" I said, " that " they were harmless as doves." I was perpetually comparing them to lambs; he was continually comparing them to wild-cats.

He went abroad; and as he was a very amiable man, he made himself friends wherever he went. I have not seen him these fifteen years till yesterday. We dined together *tête-à-tête*, and talked over the days of our youth and our travels. We talked of men and manners, women and things; and, in short, of a great variety of subjects. Well, says he to me, have you the same ideas of the sublime virtues and celestial softness of the fair sex you had when I knew you? Yes, said I, I have never kept company but with good women;

women; and I think more highly of them every day: you thought ill of them before you went abroad, and, I dare say, you think much worse of them now that you are returned. Says he, you are mistaken; when I knew you, I had seen but few women; and those merited the character I gave them. Since we parted I have seen a great many, both in England and on the continent; and this is the result of my knowledge and observation. Women resemble a ladder; and this ladder resembles Virgil's * oak; its top points to Heaven, its foot to Tartarus: I have mounted every rung of it; I have studied women from the court to the cottage; and have, in consequence, divided the sex into ten classes. The first class are angels; the last class are devils. Neither of these classes is large. The second is charming: the ninth is wicked. These two classes are very considerable. The latter of them may justly be compared to apes, foxes, hyenas, wild-cats; the former to every thing that is amiable in the creation. Of the remaining six there are

two

* " — Quantum vertice ad auras
" Aethereas, tantum radice in tartara tendit."

two that are supremely ridiculous, and four as insipid as unseasoned melons.

I told him, Ma'am, I should write you our dialogue, and asked him in what class I should place you. I am afraid to tell you his answer. Had he ranked you in the first class, I should have told you with pleasure ; but I dare not tell you he placed you only in the second.

L E T-

LETTER XXVII.

WOMAN is a very nice and a very complicated machine. Her springs are infinitely delicate; and differ from those of man pretty nearly as the work of a repetition-watch does from that of a town-clock. Look at her body; how delicately formed! Examine her senses; how exquisite and nice! Observe her understanding; how subtle and acute! But look into her heart; there is the watch work, composed of parts so minute in themselves, and so wonderfully combined, that they must be seen by a microscopic eye to be clearly comprehended.

The perception of a woman is as quick as lightning. Her penetration is intuition; I had almost said instinct. By a glance of her eye she shall draw a deep and just conclusion. Ask her how she formed it; she cannot answer the question. The philosopher deduces inferences; and his inferences shall be right; but he gets to the head of the stair-case, if I may so say, by slow degrees, and mounting step by step.

She

She arrives at the top * of the stair-case as well as he ; but whether she leaped or flew there, is more than she knows herself. While she trusts her instinct she is scarce ever deceived ; she is generally lost when she attempts to reason.

As the perception of women is surprisingly quick ; so their souls and imaginations are uncommonly susceptible. Few of them have † talents enough to write ; but when they do, how lively are their pictures ! how animated their descriptions ! But if few women write, they all talk ; and every man may judge of them in this point, from every circle he goes into. Spirit in conversation depends entirely upon

* I must be understood to mean here within a certain circle of ideas.

† I should rather say *culture* than *talents*. I have known women very uncommonly endowed by nature, and more of them of this country than of any other. Lady Hamilton, for example, has a very superior talent for music. Her execution on the harpsichord is perfect ; and she composes *extempore* better than any woman in Europe. Lady Althorp too has a very uncommon talent for drawing. I have not seen compositions of any *amateur's* equal to her's for taste and invention. If those two ladies had applied themselves to writing, I will venture to say, they would have been charming authors. How delightful a writer is Lady Mary Wortley Montague !

upon fancy ; and women all over the world talk better than men. Let a * man and a woman of apparently equal understandings go together to an opera or to a masquerade : see which of them will enjoy the most pleasure, and bring home the greatest number of interesting anecdotes. Have they a character to pourtray, or a figure to describe ? They give but three traits of either one or the other, and the character is known, or the figure placed before our eyes. Why ? From the susceptibility of their imaginations : their fancies receive lively impressions from those principal traits, and they paint those impressions with the same vivacity with which they received them. I remember seeing an English lady at Geneva who had just come out of Italy. She painted the passage of the Alps in six phrases better than I could have done by a fortnight's labour upon paper.

I look upon it that the elements are not only differently mixed in women from what

* Let it rather be a boy and a girl of the same age, wh^b go to an opera or a play for the first time. The novelty is equally striking and interesting for both. See which will comprehend the quickest, which will receive the liveliest impressions, and retain longest the impressions they receive.

what they are in men, but that they are almost of different sorts. Their fire is purer ; their clay is more refined. The difference, I think, may be about the same that there is between air and æther, between culinary and electrical fire. The æthereal spirit is not given perhaps in so large a portion to women as to men ; but it is a more subtle, and it is a finer spirit. Let a woman of fancy warm in conversation, she shall produce a hundred charming images, among which there shall not be one indelicate or coarse. Warm a man on the same subject ; he shall possibly find stronger allusions, but they shall neither be so brilliant nor so chaste.

As to gracefulness of expression, it belongs almost exclusively to women.

But men, you say, have founder judgments. That they unquestionably have ; and for that, I confess, I never could see but one reason, the difference of their education. To the age of thirteen or fourteen, girls are every where superior to boys. At fourteen, a boy begins to get some advantages over a girl, and he continues to improve, by means of education, till three or four and twenty, possibly till thirty. Her education, such as it is, is

over

over at eighteen. He has all the fountains of knowledge opened to him ; interest to stimulate him to exercise his parts ; rivals to emulate ; opponents to conquer. His talents are always on the stretch. To this he adds the advantage of travel ; and if he even should not go abroad, he can enter into an infinite number of houses in London, when she can be permitted to go into but few. A sound judgment cannot be formed but by continual exercise, and frequent comparisons. It is impossible for women to have these advantages ; and thence, I believe, the principal cause of the inferiority of their judgments. The liveliness of their fancies and of their feelings, you will say, contributes also to weaken their powers of judging. That probably does enter for something ; but education must be the grand cause ; for how many men are there among your acquaintance, who join solid judgments to fine feelings and warm imaginations ?

Take a man and a woman who have never been out of the village in which they were born, and neither of whom knows how to read ; I question very much if his discrete faculties will be found to be stronger than her's.

As

As judgment then can come but from knowledge, I will readily agree, that the number of women who have solid judgments is very small. But if I do not contend for them on this point as equal to men, I believe you will not dispute the superior sensibility of their souls. Their feelings are certainly more exquisite than those of men; and their sentiments greater and more refined. Though the severity, ill-temper, neglect and perfidy of men often force women to have recourse to * dissimulation; yet when they have noble characters to deal with, how sincere and ardent is their love! how delicate and solid their attachment! Woman is not near so selfish a creature as man. When a man is in love, the object of his passion is, if I may so say, himself. When a woman is enamoured of a man, she forgets herself, the world, and all that it contains, and wishes to exist only for the object of her affection. How few men make any violent

* Even among those unhappy females who gain their miserable existence by cunning and falsehoods, there is scarcely one who has not been taught perfidy by cruel experience, and who has not been deceived, before she ever thought of deceiving; for in love, as at play, most sharers were dupes in the beginning.

violent sacrifices to sentiment! But how many women does every man know, who have sacrificed fortune and honours to noble, pure, and disinterested motives!

A man mounts a breach; he braves danger, and obtains a victory. This is glorious and great. He has served his country, he has acquired fame, preferment, riches. Wherever he appears, respect awaits him, admiration attends him, crowds press to meet him, and theatres receive him with bursts of applause. His glory dies not with him. History preserves his memory from oblivion. That thought cheers his dying hour; and his last words pronounced with feeble pleasure are, * *I shall not all die.*

A woman sends her husband to the war; she lived but in that husband. Her soul goes with him. She trembles for the dangers of the sea; she trembles for the dangers of the land. Every billow that swells she thinks is to be his tomb; every ball that flies she imagines is directed against him. A brilliant capital appears to her a dreary desert: her universe was a man; and that man's life, her terrors tell her, is in danger. Her days are days of sorrow; her nights are sleepless

* Non omnis moriar.

sleepless nights. She sits immoveable, her mornings, in all the dignity and composure of grief, like Agrippina in her chair; and when at night she seeks repose, repose has fled her couch: the silent tears steal down her cheek, and wet her pillow; or if by chance exhausted nature finds an hour's slumber, her fancy, sickened by her distempered soul, sees in that sleep a bleeding lover or his mangled corse. Time passes, and her grief increases; till, worn out at length by too much tenderness, she falls the victim of too exquisite a sensibility, and sinks with sorrow to her grave.

No, cold unfeeling reader, these are not pictures of *my* creation. They are neither charged nor embellished; but both copied faithfully from nature—The Count * D'Estaing, and Lady Cornwallis.

* He is now a Grandee of Spain, covered with ribbands, and aiming to arrive at the head of the state. His sentiments were very noble; but they had for object only himself. This unfortunate lady thought not of herself; she died for another.

The circumstances I alluded to about this Officer I was an eye-witness of. I saw him last April surrounded in the public gardens at Paris by crowds of admirers; and one night that he came to the opera, the whole theatre received him with repeated acclamations.

LETTER XXVIII.

L'OR *se partage, mais non pas la louange* ; And hence the reason why authors and beauties detest each other so sincerely. You, Madam, are an exception ; and so undoubtedly, Sir, are you. You know too, each of you, one or two more exceptions ; but I am sure you will admit the truth of my assertion for all the other Sister-beauties and Brother-wits of your acquaintance.

The instant a very beautiful girl begins to attract the admiration of the world, Lord, says an inferior beauty, I wonder what the men can see in Miss — ; I am sure there are a hundred women in London handsomer than she is ; meaning by these hundred women one single woman only, that is herself. The certain proof of this is, that there is not one of these hundred beauties, whose merits this lady will not deny, as soon as ever she hears her particularly praised.

An

An author's fate is nearly the same. As soon as he begins to be well spoken of, there issues forth an intrepid band of Myrmidons, all ready to knock him down, for no other reason but because he has got up. Every author is a monopolist. He would have all the praise in the world for himself. He does not see that there is room for Horace and Virgil on the same shelf. He cannot comprehend that Shakespeare may be talked of for a quarter of an hour, and Richardson for a quarter of an hour after. No. Were he to fill a library for a friend, he would put no man's works in it but his own; and if he could effect it, he would never let people talk of any other subject. I remember *à propos* of this, a trait of Voltaire. He was jealous of a man that was hanged, because he thought he was too much talked of. A remarkably daring criminal was executed in Paris. Voltaire supped that night in a large company, where the conversation turned principally upon this man's crime, and his behaviour at the place of execution. The Wit bore it as long as he could; but at last, unable to contain himself, he cried out, "No con-

"versation but about this infamous mis-
"creant, and Merope was acted to-night!"

The love of praise is very laudable. A generous ambition ought to be the first passion of every noble mind. But, dear Sirs, and dear Madams, do not think you are adding to your laurels by clipping those of other people. Permit me to assure you, you are doing the contrary ; you are clipping your own. Wit and beauty, however enchanting they may be, are of infinitely less value than a benevolent heart. The world is enlightened ; you cannot deceive it ; it sees your motive. And when you launch a sarcasm, or point an epigram, you may possibly give your rival a slight wound ; but, be persuaded, you give a mortal one to yourself.

Beauties, I have observed, are only jealous of Beauties that they see ; but authors are jealous of authors whom they never have seen. Some indeed carry it still farther ; they envy the dead. Voltaire was one of these. He envied every man that had acquired fame in any part of the world, from Homer down to Jean Baptiste Rousseau. In this country, thank heaven, there is no envy ; and if, by chance, a writer is criticised, it is only done through good-

good-nature, for the sake of enlightening him. One consolation he is sure of, that whenever he is ill-spoken of, it will be, at least, in delicate language. The matter may be severe, but it will be softened by the elegance of the manner. I had a fine banquet for *my* vanity one day in a bookseller's shop, where I was unknown, and where I went to purchase Mr. Hayley's *Essay on History*. The bookseller had it not; and while his boy was bringing it from another shop, I asked him some questions about new publications. No, Sir, says a genteel-looking man that was there, there is no taste in this country; they buy all manner of trash; and, what is worse, they praise it after. I wrote formerly; but seeing the age had no discernment, I left it off; and now, Sir, there is scarce any thing but wretched scribblers in the whole kingdom. There certainly, Sir, said I, are great numbers of bad writers in every country; but, I believe, there are some authors here at present who have as strong sense, as much ingenuity, and as highly polished taste as are to be found in any nation of Europe.—Who are they, Sir? I am sure I should be very glad to know them.—Dr. Johnson,

Sir,

Sir, must be allowed to be a nervous and profound moralist ; Mr. Burke, you must grant, is a fine writer ; Mr. Sheridan—He begged to be excused ; he saw very little merit in any of them ; and if they had *some*, it was buried under such heaps of blemishes, as entitled them, on the whole, rather to censure than to praise. He then particularised a number of their defects, seasoning his criticisms, every now and then, with most abusive epithets. As I am not fond either of abuse or falsehoods, I shall not copy any of his remarks on these gentlemen. I mentioned to him afterwards two or three others in different lines of literature. One was a mountebank ; another had not common sense ; a third was wretched, execrable. Now here, thought I, is a fine occasion for me to fish out a compliment for myself. This man does not know me ; and as he is so outrageously violent against all the world, a *little* praise from him will be doubly grateful. Pray, Sir, (addressing him with an insinuating tone of voice, and feeling all complacency within) have you read *Sherlock's Letters*? Yes, Sir, I have read him ; and a very laborious thick-headed fellow he is—I looked like Parsons in the

Critic,

Critic, when Sneer gives him his portrait. I strove to laugh, and repeat his words—Ha! ha! ha! Yes, Sir, he is a very laborious—I wanted to say the other word; but *thick-headed* stuck in my throat; I could not get it out *. You may judge I did not stay much longer; I had got enough of his conversation; so I took up my poem, and walked off, muttering to myself, like Sofia, “an enemy to the “muses and to music.”

* I plead guilty to *labour*. *Thick-headedness* I deny.

LETTER XXIX.

WHILE Admiral Rodney was beating the Spaniards last winter, I was engaged in fighting with the French. He was teaching Europe to respect the British flag ; and I was teaching her to venerate the name of Shakspeare. One advantage I had over this gallant Officer : *He* only conquered on the ocean ; but *I* carried the war into the very heart of the enemy's country, and fought Voltaire before the gates of the Louvre. One advantage this gallant Officer had over me ; he gained several hundred pounds a year by his campaign ; and I lost some hundreds by mine. The uncommon success of my books has ruined me. However, I do not repine ; for I not only acquired great literary fame, but I endeavoured to serve my country even in the war ; I did all that I could to eat up her enemies, by dining and supping with them almost every day of my life.

P. S. Congreve said there was something very like wit in Cibber's Plays. I declare, upon reading over these Letters, I thought once or twice, I saw something *very like* vanity in them. And, Reader, after all, who knows but the Reviewers were in the right? May be I *am* a vain man. Well, if I am, it is not a crime. There is no great harm in a little innocent vanity. If it was a sin, what would become of all the women in the world? And what would become of my friends the French?

LETTER XXX.

I Don't think the worse of a man for having a *small portion* of vanity. Æneas, perhaps, is not less interesting, for having a little dash of the coxcomb in him. *I am the pious Æneas* has been objected to a thousand times; and yet it was the judicious Virgil who made him say it.

When a man is in a strange country, where nobody knows his merits, and where he wants to have them known, what would you have him do? You would have him wait till people have time to weigh him, and if he has real merit it will then appear. That, I grant you, is the better way; but then it is so tiresome to wait, and it costs others so much trouble to find out these perfections; whereas telling the world at once what you are, saves *it* trouble and *yourself* time. So thought Æneas; and so think I.

Readers are divided into two classes; people who have talents, and people who have none. Those who have no parts cannot discover your merits; those who have,

Have, if they do not talk against you, possess at least the secret of holding their tongues. Now an author cannot have fame unless he is praised: the ignorant can't praise him, and the knowing won't. I see no resource left him but to praise himself.

Considering that this is my real way of thinking, I should imagine my reader ought to be surprised at my modesty in paying myself so few compliments. However, as I have observed, there is no kind of writing less successful than panegyric; nor any species of panegyric less relished than that which an author bestows upon himself; I here renounce vanity and all its works, and promise faithfully never to praise myself again as long as I live. And that you may not be in doubt about my motives for this sacrifice, I confess to you that it is solely to pay my court to my readers, and particularly to my *dear* brother-authors.

All the world has condemned Virgil for that * *I am the pious Æneas*. I will venture to assert, that Virgil is in the right; and that all the world is in the wrong.

Æneas

* *Sum pius Æneas.*

Æneas is *not* vain ; he only praises his heart : the man *alone* is vain who praises his understanding. The reason of this distinction is evident ; it is in every man's power to have a good heart, but no man can give himself a good understanding.

Obvious conclusion : that *I* was not vain when I said in my dedication to Lord Bristol, *my soul was pure* ; though it would have been unpardonable vanity in me to have hinted that I had a ray of common sense. I hope I have now convinced the reader, that, notwithstanding appearances are somewhat against us, Æneas and *I* are two very civil modest persons.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



